

LIGHT HORSE HARRY'S LEGION



EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

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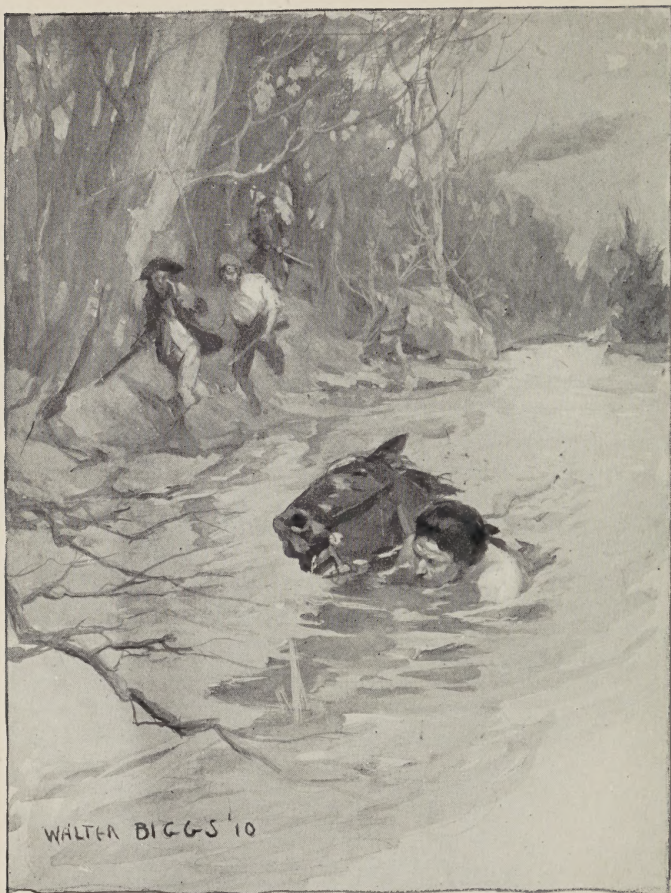


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COME ASHORE OR WE'LL SHOOT (p. 150)

LIGHT HORSE HARRY'S LEGION

BY

EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

*Author of "The Boys of Old Monmouth," "The Rider of the
Black Horse," "The Camp-Fire of Mad Anthony,"
"A Jersey Boy in the Revolution," etc., etc.*



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LEGION

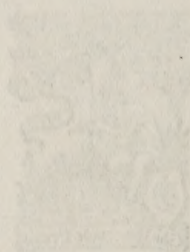
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LIGHT HORSE HARRY'S LEGION

CHAPTER I

FIVE ON HORSEBACK

"As I was saying —"

"You've been talking a long time, Solomon. It is high time for you to say something. Why did n't you do that a good while ago?"

"As I was saying, the reason why we did n't take Benedict Arnold was —"

"Was what, Solomon?"

"Was because —"

"That's no reason. That's a fact. We did not get the traitor, did we?"

"We did not."

"So I concluded from your numerous and extended remarks."

"We had him tight —"

"And let him slip through our fingers?"

"Not exactly. The trouble was that Light Horse Harry did not follow his own plan, but —"

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"You have as many 'ifs' and 'ands' as an old woman, Solomon. Benedict Arnold was right there in his house in New York, wasn't he?"

"According to what I hear, he was."

"Who was to make him a prisoner?"

"I suspect it was John Champe."

"What!"

"Fact, suh."

"But Sergeant-Major John Champe deserted! There is no question about that. And he is a Virginian, too, and has been with Light Horse Harry ever since '76 — four years ago! I wouldn't have believed it of him if his own mother had told me. John Champe a deserter? It does n't seem possible!"

"Maybe you don't know as much as you think you do."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. John Champe may be doing work for Light Horse Harry for all you know."

"Do you know anything about it?"

"Only what I have heard."

"And what is that?"

"There has been a whisper that Light Horse Harry and General Washington fixed up a plan to trap the traitor in New York. If what

I hear is true, John Champe was to desert according to the plan, and was to go to New York."

"Go on, man! You are the camp gossip. You know a good many things that are so, and a good many more that are not. But then, that's the way with a gossip. Why don't you go on and tell what you heard about Champe?"

"I don't want to tell anything that isn't so, and you say that's what I'm doing."

"Never mind, Solomon," laughed his companion. "You tell what you have heard, and I'll tell you afterward whether or not it's true."

Aggrieved, but too eager to relate his story to permit of his being silent long, Solomon Garlick prepared to resume his tale. He was a long, angular man, his hair was of a dull red, and great splotches of reddish brown could be seen on his face, his neck, and his huge hands. The horse he was riding was manifestly one on which Solomon might rely for both speed and endurance; and at any moment there might arise a demand for either or both of these qualities. Solomon Garlick was forty years of age—much older than either of his four companions on that autumn morning in 1780, when the five mounted men

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were making their way through the heavy roads of sand, not far from Monmouth Court House, New Jersey, where Light Horse Harry Lee was awaiting the coming of the new additions to his legion. As soon as the men, whom Washington had selected with special care, should join the dashing leader, Lee was to set forth for the southern colonies, — hardly beset now and threatened not only by perils from the invading redcoats, whom Clinton had sent southward, but also by far more serious dangers from enemies at home.

Beside Solomon rode Stacey Brooke, a boy not more than eighteen years of age, quick, active, impulsive, and almost as enthusiastic in his admiration for their intrepid leader as was Solomon Garlick himself. But a glance at the young horseman served to show that young Brooke prided himself upon his superiority over his companion. His uniform was neither torn nor worn and faded like that of the older man. His air of confidence betokened birth, breeding, and a home of vastly different character from that in which his companion had been reared. He was not so tall as Solomon, and certainly not so angular, though on his well-knit frame there was not an ounce of superfluous flesh.

Behind these two leaders of the little band rode John Parvin, a young soldier of Stacey's age. His blue eyes were shining with the glow of the interest which the conversation of the two riders in front of him had aroused, and it was equally evident that his sympathies were with the younger man when reference was made to the well-known desertion of young Sergeant-Major Champe from Light Horse Harry's legion. John Parvin's horse was black, having a white star on its forehead and four white "stocking-feet," — plainly an animal that was capable of great endurance, even if its speed might be less than Stacey's. Of John Parvin himself it may be said that his well-knit, muscular frame, his brown hair and blue eyes, the smile that came readily to his face, explained some of the reasons why he too, though little more than a boy in years, had been selected as a member of the legion which was soon to make a name for itself that would be known as long as that of the new country, for whose independence it was struggling, should endure.

Beside him was riding another young soldier, only slightly older than Stacey or John. He was much shorter than either and not one of his companions had heard his name, though

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Solomon had been assured, when he was told early that morning to conduct the little band to Colonel Lee's legion, that the new man was of considerable importance, despite his youthfulness. Although he was short in stature the breadth of his shoulders and something apparent, though undefined, in his easy bearing as he rode his horse, gave an answer to the impression that the young soldier was possessed of unusual physical strength. He had seldom spoken since the band had started early in the morning; but he, too, like the man beside him, was plainly interested in the conversation between John and Solomon.

The fifth member of the little band must not be overlooked, for he is to have no unimportant part in the progress of this story. The animal he bestrode appeared at first sight to be a horse, but a closer inspection would have caused an observer first to hesitate and then to conclude that the beast was a mule, though the conclusion would have been far from final. If Job Buryman's steed was indeed a mule, its ears had been trimmed and its tail had been cut. Whatever the true nature of the animal was, it was manifest that it was a powerful brute, large, strong, and possessing marvelous powers of endurance. One might suspect as

he glanced at the legs of the "horse" that it could jump, too, as no one of the others could; perhaps the tricks that lurked in the innocent-appearing eyes might be of a kind to increase the fear, even if it did not enlarge the respect, of one who might venture too near.

The rider of the strange animal, however, was even more puzzling than his mount. Unannounced and uninvited he had joined the little band when it left Red Bank. Solomon had stared blankly at the man when he calmly declared his intention of journeying with the men to Lee's camp, and of enlisting in the legion. The man's face was that of a boy, but his head was bald and in appearance might have been that of an aged man. Although his age was uncertain, and Solomon's first impulse, as he gazed at the stranger, who was slightly deformed, one shoulder seeming to be much smaller than its companion, was to declare that the stranger could not go with them, he had later withdrawn his opposition. At the suggestion of John, that the man and his mule or horse or mule-horse or horse-mule should be permitted to go with them, and that Light Horse Harry should be the one to decide whether or not a place might be found for the nondescript beast and rider, the hatless

man was permitted to become the rear-guard. He had no weapon of any kind ; his clothing originally might have been of that dull, home-dyed and home-made kind in which the Jersey Blues were clad. At present, however, all that was known of him was that his name was Job Buryman, and that his expressed purpose was to go to Monmouth Court House and report to Light Horse Harry that he was eager to join his legion.

This legion, already famous in the colonies for its work at Germantown, Brandywine, Monmouth, and elsewhere, was now to be enlarged and the entire force sent southward, where, it was believed by Washington and other generals, the bravery of Lee, as well as his knowledge of the country into which he was going, would be of untold service to the suffering patriots in that region.

"It's reported that John Champe got into New York all right," answered Solomon.

"But it's reported, too, that he ran away from our camp about midnight that night he — he left," responded Stacey.

"That's correct — according to what I hear."

"But Captain Carnes told me himself that he reported John's desertion just as soon as it

was found out. He went straight to Light Horse Harry himself, roused him out of bed, and reported that John Champe — and he a Virginian! — had deserted!”

“What did Colonel Lee have to say about it?” inquired Solomon.

“Why, the captain told me that he thought he never would be able to make the colonel wake up; and even after he had left the quarters he was afraid he would go to sleep again without doing anything about John’s desertion.”

“Did he go to sleep?” asked Solomon, slowly winking one eye as he spoke.

“No, but the captain said he thought he never would be able to make Light Horse Harry believe that one of his own dragoons had really deserted. However, the colonel at last waked up, mustered the whole squadron of horse, and then the captain showed him that one of the men really was gone. Of course a good deal of time had been wasted; but when the colonel at last was convinced that John was gone, and had taken his arms, baggage, and orderly-book with him, then he was ready to act.”

“What did he do?”

“He sent Captain Carnes — no, after the captain had his men all ready to start, Light

Horse Harry turned the command of the band over to Lieutenant Middleton."

"What for?"

"You'll have to ask the colonel. By this time John Champe had a start of a full hour, but there had been a heavy shower just at night, and the ground was all soft. The stars were out and the sky was clear when the troopers started. Whenever they came to a crossroads and didn't know which way to turn, one of the men would dismount and look for the footprints in the mud. Finally, after they had taken a short-cut through the woods below Bergen, the lieutenant divided his band. One part went up the hill not far from the tavern there —"

"Yes, I know. It's the Three Pigeons."

"That's right. Well, they saw John Champe not far ahead of them, and he saw them too at the same moment. The two parts of Lieutenant Middleton's band swept around the hill and both were sure they had got ahead of John; but when they came together on the bridge they found that he had slipped out of their hands. Middleton ran back to the tavern and asked the first man he saw if a trooper had passed. As soon as he was told that one had just gone, they took up the chase again;

but though they saw John several times he somehow managed to dodge them, until at last they saw him waving to some men in a British barge near Paulus Hook, and before Middleton could get him, John was taken on board and was rowed out into the stream. It was good-bye John, then."

"What has all that to do with Benedict Arnold?"

"Listen and I'll —"

Solomon stopped abruptly as a strange and startling sound came from the dark woods near the roadside.

"What's that?" he demanded in a low voice.

No one replied, and the low moaning sound was repeated. All five sat motionless, listening intently, and then Job Buryman spoke for the first time since the departure from Red Bank.

CHAPTER II

A HELPLESS ADDITION

"It's a 'haunt'!" said Job solemnly.

"A what?" demanded John abruptly, as he turned sharply on his horse and glanced at the strange man behind him. The sun had already disappeared, and beside the dusty road, heavy with sand, the oaks and pines were standing as motionless as the little band of horsemen that had halted when the moan was first heard.

"He means a ghost," suggested the young rider whose name was unknown to his companions.

"If he was down in Virginia, we'd know what that means," said John, attempting to speak lightly. "Every darkey on our plantation —"

What the negroes on the Parvin place were accustomed to say was not explained, for almost as if in contradiction to what John was saying the groan by the roadside was heard again — more prolonged and louder than before.

"This place is where Uncle Simon Morey was found hanging to a tree," muttered Job, his teeth chattering as he glanced about him in the deepening darkness. "I've always heard that he comes back in the fall and warns every one that passes. I know another road to the Court House," he added eagerly. "We don't want to be too keen on this after such a warning. I'll show you. You just follow me."

As he spoke, Job endeavored to turn his horse about, but the perversity of the animal plainly had been aroused, perhaps by the alarm of his rider. At all events the brute planted his forefeet firmly in the sand and as he stretched forward his ears and lifted his stump of a tail, he sent forth sounds that awoke the echoes in the distant woods.

"He-e-haw! He-e-e Ha-a-w! He-e-e-e Ha-a-a-a-w!" brayed the mule.

In the dim light his wicked little eyes seemed almost to gleam with delight over the commotion his sonorous "song" aroused.

Startling as the interruption was, it nevertheless seemed to break in upon the tension of the little party; and John laughed loudly as soon as he recovered from his first feeling of surprise.

"That's more like the voice of your Uncle Simon," he said lightly.

"He wasn't my uncle," replied Job solemnly. "He was uncle to every one. He'd been —"

"There's that groan again!" exclaimed John abruptly, as the distressing sound broke in upon Job's narrative. "I'm going to find out what it is," he added, as he leaped lightly to the ground.

Before John could act, however, the unknown rider had preceded him. "Hold my horse for me, Job," he said, as he tossed the bridle rein to his companion. Then, without glancing at the other members of the little band, he slipped hastily to the edge of the woods, pushed the bushes apart, and entered, disappearing instantly.

Silence fell over the party as all stopped and watched the place where the young stranger had disappeared. The moments passed slowly, the darkness of the forest increased, and even Job's strange steed seemed to feel that a critical moment had arrived, for he too stood silently peering at the brush which the young soldier had entered.

"Some one coming up the road?" whispered John to Solomon.

"Can't hear anybody," replied Solomon, when he had turned in the direction intimated by his young companion and had listened intently.

"I'm sure I heard something or some one," persisted John in a low voice.

"If there is any one, let him come." Solomon spoke in apparent fearlessness, but he drew a huge pistol from his belt.

"Why does n't this fellow come back?" inquired John a moment later, gazing now into the woods.

"He'll come."

"Who is he, anyway?"

"Can't say."

"Where did he come from?"

"Don't know."

"Why did you bring him then?"

"I did n't. He came."

"Don't you know anything about him?"

"Not much."

"How did he happen to come then?"

"He did n't 'happen.' He was waiting for us at Red Bank. Major Applegate vouched for him. The major said he was all right, and that he knew all about him. He has word of some kind or other from General Washington for Light Horse Harry."

"Why did n't you say he was a courier then?"

"I don't know that he is."

"He may be getting us into trouble," suggested John apprehensively. "I could have sworn that I heard some one up the road, and this groaning may have been a part of a trick to catch us. We don't know anything about him, it seems. I don't like the look of it. Besides, we have n't heard any more groans —"

"There he is now!" whispered Solomon pointing excitedly to their recent companion, who at that very moment was emerging from the brush. "Look! Look at him! What's that on his back?"

"It's a man!" replied John excitedly, as he turned quickly to their unknown companion.

It was manifest that the burden the young soldier was bearing on his shoulder was indeed a man. The arms were hanging helplessly, and apparently the poor fellow was lifeless. Despite his interest and excitement, John nevertheless noted the ease with which the stranger carried his load, and then carefully placed the body upon the grass by the roadside.

"Who is it? What does it mean?" whis-

pered John in keen excitement, as he ran to the spot where the body was placed.

Apparently ignoring the question, the unknown paused long enough to peer intently, first up and then down the sandy road, before he said quietly to Solomon: "You'd better keep a lookout! No one knows who may be coming. This looks as if somebody had been along here, and not very long ago either."

"Is the man dead?" inquired John in a low voice.

"It is n't a man, and he is n't dead."

"A woman?"

"No, a boy. He's been badly hurt. Looks as if he had been thrown bodily into the woods. He was almost covered by the mud. Poor little chap! I don't believe he is more than fourteen years old."

All the time the young soldier was speaking he was loosening the clothing of the unconscious lad. "We can't leave him here," he resumed. "Here! You go and get me some water. We passed a brook not more than two hundred feet back in the road. The rest of you keep a sharp lookout. I've got this little fellow flat on his back, and I'll chafe his arms and bathe his face in cold water as soon as it comes."

John had abruptly turned back in the road

to do as he had been bidden. Job was still seated on the back of his mule, which had advanced and was sniffing about the body on the grass.

"Do you know who the boy is?" inquired Solomon.

"How should I know? I never was in this part of the world before in all my life."

"Can't we take him on with us? I don't like to delay here."

"You can go on — all of you," said the young soldier shortly. "I shall stay here and help the little fellow. Ah, that's what I thought," he added, as a low moan escaped the boy's lips. "He's been hit on the head."

"Who did it?" inquired Job, speaking for the first time.

"Perhaps it was your Uncle Simon."

"Tha-at's so," stammered Job. "I told you he 'haunted' this spot. He has been still —"

Job did not complete the sentence, for, terrified by what he heard or suspicious of future ills, his mule emitted another of his loud-resounding brays, and before the startled rider was able to recover himself he was thrown from the mule's back. Landing in a sitting posture in the sandy road, Job stared vaguely at the mule, which was speeding over the road

before them, and in a brief time disappeared from sight in the darkness.

"Your turn next, Job," said the young soldier dryly. "As soon as I have helped this little fellow, I'll see what I can do for you."

"I'd rather have you see what you can do for that mule. Somebody told me that if I'd cut his tail off and trim his ears to look like a horse's, he'd really feel as if he was a horse and would act accordingly. But it didn't work," Job added solemnly as he arose.

"Are n't you going to look up your animal, Job?" asked Solomon.

"I don't have to."

"He looks like a valuable animal."

"He is," answered Job quickly. "He's worth twenty pounds."

"Of what?"

"Here you are!" said the young soldier before Job could reply to the question. John Parvin was returning from the brook, and as he had no other means of carrying water he had made use of his hat. "Hold it right here," ordered the unknown young man as John obediently knelt beside him. "That's right! You understand without my having to explain everything to you," he added, as he began to bathe the sufferer's face.

It was a new and rather strange experience for John to be receiving orders from a stranger and to be obeying them too, but somehow he did not protest, and his eagerness to aid was as marked as that of the man kneeling beside him.

For a half hour the two worked over the suffering lad. Several times they thought consciousness was about to return to him when his moanings became more pronounced, but the boy did not speak and apparently did not understand anything that was said to him.

At last the stranger arose, and turning to Solomon said, "We don't appear to be able to help him."

"Then we must leave him here. We've waited too long already. Light Horse Harry will send us to the guard-house if we don't get into the Court House before long."

"I shall not leave him."

"That's for you to settle. I thought you were ordered to report with us."

"I was."

"We can't stay here any longer."

"I'll take the little fellow with me then. Call Job. He may know of some house near by where we can leave the lad."

Solomon Garlick, obeying the directions of

the young stranger as readily as John Parvin had done a few minutes before, summoned his companions, assisted Job to regain his mule, and then preparations were at once made to resume the journey. Lightly the unknown soldier picked the unconscious lad up in his arms, and before any one could offer to aid him had remounted his horse, and carrying his charge before him, turned into the road.

"Who is that fellow, anyway?" whispered John to Solomon.

"I told you I don't know," replied Solomon gruffly.

"Did you ever see such a powerful fellow? He had that boy under his arm when he mounted his horse. You could n't do that."

"Humph!" sniffed the leader.

"He'd pick you up just as easily," continued John.

"Not unless I wanted him to."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Sol Garlick. If you will let him try and then keep him from doing it, I'll give you a half-joe."

"You need n't give me anything. I'll let him try if he wants to, but he'll have to wait till he's older — and stronger, before he does it."

"Well, try him, anyway!" urged John mis-

chievously. "He orders us round as if he was General Washington's right-hand man. And the strange part of it is we do exactly what he tells us. Solomon," John added quickly, "what's that light ahead?"

"A house," replied Solomon after a brief silence.

"Let's go a little faster. We may be able to find out something there about this boy."

In response to the suggestion the pace of the band was quickened; but when John glanced back at the young soldier and his burden, he was aware that the increased speed was apparently ignored by the rider. He marveled at the strength of the stranger, but when the party stopped at the house in which the lighted candle had been seen, all other thoughts were ignored in the excitement that instantly arose.

CHAPTER III

THE BARON OF THE PINES

JOB, holding his mule by the bridle, had gone before, and now was approaching from the lane which led to the house. Apparently he was awaiting the coming of his companions, but even his interest in them and his pleasure in having recovered his steed were manifestly less than his eagerness to impart the information which he had received from the inmates of the house toward which his mule had turned.

"I've found out who the boy is," said Job eagerly.

"Who?" inquired Solomon, as the band halted.

"He belongs here. He had been to the mill to get a load of grist. About two hours ago the horses he was driving came home. The wagon was empty, the wagon-box was smashed, the horses looked as if they had been in the fight at Monmouth Court House, and there was n't anything to be found of the boy."

"Probably his horses ran away with him. He must have been thrown out and that was the way he hurt his head."

"No, it was not," suggested the young soldier, who was still holding the unconscious lad in his arms.

"How do you know it was n't?" Solomon demanded sharply, as he turned to the speaker.

"I know it from the way he was lying when I found him. He could n't have been thrown there by any upset of the wagon. He was twenty feet from the road and behind a big pine tree."

"How did he get there then?"

"Probably no one can tell that except the boy—and those who put him where I found him."

"Who put him there?"

"I told you I did not know. Perhaps his own family can explain that to us. I'll take him into the house. You said he lived here, did n't you?" the young soldier added, turning to Job as he spoke.

"I did."

"What is his name?"

"Jim."

"That's a good name—as far as it goes."

Shall I take him alone or do the rest of you want to come?" he added, addressing Solomon.

"We'll all go," replied Solomon promptly, and the little band at once turned to the door of the house, in which a woman was holding a lighted candle in her hands and looking keenly at the men who could be seen but not distinguished by her.

"What is it?" she said quietly, when the young soldier dismounted, and tenderly bearing his burden deposited it on the bed in the room to which he was directed by her. "Is he dead?"

"No," replied the soldier, amazed at the quiet manner in which the woman, manifestly the mother of the lad, received him. "He has been hurt."

"I knew it. I was sure of it when the horses came home without him and no load in the wagon."

"Are you alone?" inquired Solomon.

"Yes. My husband started for the mill as soon as the team came back without Jim."

"How far is the mill from here?"

"Three miles."

"When will your husband be back?"

"I don't know."

"Solomon," said the unknown young sol-

dier, addressing the leader, "this woman must not be left here alone with this boy."

"She must, because we can't stay, and that's all there is to it!"

"You go on to the Court House and report, and I'll stay here until her husband comes back."

"The boy has been hurt already. You can't do anything about that. Your staying won't do any good."

"Perhaps I can help her with her boy; and then, too, if the men who hit him come here I may be able to do a little good."

"You don't know anything about how he was hurt."

"I'll stay a little while," said the young soldier quietly. "You go on and I'll come just as soon as the man comes back."

"If you only would stay," began the woman, her voice trembling as she spoke.

"I shall stay," said the young man. "Don't be afraid. Solomon, you may report to Light Horse Harry that I'll be in camp soon."

Apparently looking upon the matter as already settled, the young man gave no more heed to his companions and at once began to busy himself in his new task. For a moment Solomon appeared to be angry at the way in

which both he and his authority had been ignored, but nevertheless a brief time afterward the four men departed from the lonely farmhouse and the young soldier was left with the mother and her wounded boy.

For a time both were busied with the unconscious lad; but when a half hour had elapsed and the patient was resting quietly, the woman beckoned her helper to follow her into the kitchen.

"I can get along now till my husband comes back," she said.

"Do you have any idea how the boy was hurt?" inquired the young soldier ignoring her trembling statement.

"I saw Jim Fenton and five of his gang pass this afternoon."

"Who is he?"

"Don't you know Jim Fenton?" asked the woman in surprise.

"I can't say that I do. I don't believe I ever heard of him."

"He's the leader of one of the gangs of pine-robbers."

"I have heard of the pine-robbers," said the young man quickly.

"He's one of 'em."

"Are his headquarters near here?"

"Yes. He has a place near a groggery over yonder in the pines."

"How far away?"

"About three miles."

"Did your boy have to pass the place to-day on his way to the mill?"

"Yes."

"And you think this Jim Fenton, as you call him, is the one who hurt your boy?"

"Might 'a' been some one o' his gang."

"How large is his gang?"

"I don't know. Sometimes he has twenty-five with him, I reckon."

The expression on the face of the young soldier became more serious than the woman could perceive in the dim light of the candle which she had placed upon the near-by table. He was thinking of her reference to the pine-robbers, the organized bands of desperadoes who had their quarters in the region. Taking advantage of the troublous times, they had made so many raids in the central and northern parts of the state that their very name had become a source of terror. Although these men acknowledged no allegiance to either party engaged in the war, their evil deeds were more frequent among those who were true to the cause of the patriots. And what

had angered the true-hearted people, struggling for their liberties, more than even the sufferings inflicted upon the helpless victims of the pine-robbers, was the fact that the plunder which the desperadoes secured was collected in their hiding-places among the pines. When a sufficient quantity had been obtained, word was secretly sent to New York; and William Franklin, who had been the last royal governor of the colony and now was the most bitter enemy of his former friends, sent vessels to Toms River to receive and bear away to New York the ill-gotten gains of these evil men.

All this was well known to the quiet young soldier; but if the lad whom he had befriended had been attacked by the pine-robbers, this was the first instance in which he himself had come into contact with the villainous gangs.

"You say you saw Fenton pass this afternoon?" said he thoughtfully.

"Yes, he and five of his gang."

"Have you any special reason to be afraid of him?"

"Yes — no — I don't know. He stopped here one day last winter, tied my husband in a chair, and then held one of my feet over the fire until I thought the flesh would drop from the

bones. I am still lame and probably always shall be."

"What did he do that for?"

"He tried to make me tell him where we kept a sock full of coin. We did n't have any coin so I had n't hidden any sock full of it. He would n't believe me when I told him."

The woman was speaking in a monotonous tone, almost as if she were indifferent to her sufferings or they had concerned another person than herself.

"Why did your husband let the men tie him in a chair? Why did n't he fight?"

"You don't know Jim Fenton. He's the strongest man in New Jersey. He used to be a blacksmith at the Court House, an' they say he could take a two-inch iron bar in his hands and bend it double. No man can do anything against Jim Fenton," continued the woman, shaking her head.

"He must be the worst man in the country."

"I don't know that he's any worse 'n Fagan was. Fagan's dead now. Two hundred people fin'ly got after him and made him stretch hemp over on the Trenton road. I saw the body myself hangin' there where it was left for weeks—an old clay pipe hangin' from his mouth."

"Horrible!" said the soldier.

"You'd say 'horrible' an' a good deal more'n that if you'd been here. Then there's Moody's gang, an' —"

The woman stopped abruptly and an expression of terror appeared on her face, though she did not cry out or move from the place in which she was standing.

Startled, but without moving from his position, the young soldier glanced in the direction in which the terrified woman was gazing. In the open doorway of the kitchen a man was standing. His face could not be distinctly seen, but his great size and his strength were alike manifest at once.

"Found that sock yet?" demanded the man without entering the kitchen.

"I told you the truth, Jim Fenton, when you burned my foot last spring. You know we have n't any money, or socks left either, for the matter of that."

The man then was Jim Fenton himself! The young soldier was aware that his heart was beating more rapidly as he heard the name of the outlaw — "the Baron of the Pines" as the man often was called. His manner, however, was unchanged as he stepped back to obtain a clearer view of the burly robber.

"I've heard women sing that tune and

then sing 'nother after they 'd talked with me a spell. Why don't you ask me to come in? Seems t' me ye 're not over an' above perlite t' a man what 's lost his way in the dark," growled Fenton in his deepest bass.

"You know I don't want you to come inside th' door," said the woman simply.

"Oh! ho! Ye don't feel half so bad 'bout my comin' in as ye will 'bout my goin' out if ye don't tell me where ye keep yer coin."

"We have n't a farthing in the house."

"Now mebbe we might fin' some, if we tried real hard."

"You have done us enough harm already, Jim Fenton," pleaded the woman. "You have no mercy."

"I've got more mercy 'n I have shillings. You just tell me where ye keep yer silver an' I'll let you have all the mercy I got."

The man laughed brutally and stepped forward into the room. Apparently he had ignored the young soldier, whose quiet bearing had not indicated that he was inclined to join in the woman's protest. It may have been that his attitude was also mistaken for one of fear. At all events the pine-robber did not appear to regard the presence of the stranger as in any way likely to interfere with his own designs.

“Don’t come in here!”

The young man spoke in low tones, and Fenton stopped abruptly as he turned in surprise to the speaker.

“Why not?” he roared.

The soldier did not reply, and with a louder laugh the outlaw again stepped forward, not even deigning to bestow so much as a glance on the man who had forbidden him to enter.

Suddenly the soldier leaped forward, and the candle which was burning on the kitchen table was extinguished as the table itself was overturned. In the darkness that instantly followed, the pine-robber was seized about the waist, and before he could recover from the unexpected attack he was being rushed backward to the open doorway. Chairs were overturned in the struggle, the stifled exclamations of Fenton’s rage seemed to fill the air; but the blacksmith was unable to check the rush until the men came to the door, and there Fenton contrived to place a hand on the doorpost and brace himself.

CHAPTER IV

A PERILOUS COMMISSION

THE struggling young soldier, in spite of his quiet bearing, had won for himself the name in the army of being one of the most skillful and powerful wrestlers among the soldiers. In the "rough and tumble" games in which the camps delighted he had frequently been called upon to uphold the honor of his company in the friendly wrestling matches. Not once had he been defeated, and yet his quiet manner had remained unchanged in all his victories. Naturally all this was unknown to his opponent and to the terrified woman in the room, neither of whom had heard so much as his name.

In his present contest, however, the unknown soldier apparently had found his equal. The blacksmith's muscles were almost as hard as the iron he had hammered in the peaceful days before the revolution of the colonies. Even the tricks which the young soldier had employed in his wrestling bouts seemed to be of no avail. Try as he might, he was powerless to break the hold of the man, though it speed-

ily was equally plain that Fenton was unable to do more than his contestant.

“Get the poker!” gasped the soldier, as he put forth all his strength in his effort to tear away Fenton’s grasp on the doorposts. “Break his hold! Look out! Don’t hit me!”

The intrepid woman, instantly heeding the call for aid, seized the weapon as she had been bidden, and ran swiftly to the spot where the desperate struggle was taking place. For a time her attempts to aid her defender were fruitless. The call for aid had served to arouse a stronger determination on Fenton’s part to throw off the man who had attacked him. Each contestant was exerting himself as he had not done before. Their labored breathing could be heard throughout the room. The issue of the struggle was understood by each, and neither desired to be the victim of the other’s marvelous strength.

The woman had not uttered a sound since the struggle had begun, but darting about the men, holding her poker raised, she was watching for an opportunity to assist her protector. At last the moment arrived, and in the dim light she brought the iron poker down upon the hand of Fenton, with which he was clinging to the doorpost. The blow was not

heavy, but it was sufficient to cause the blacksmith for an instant to relax his grasp. Instantly the young soldier seized his advantage, and putting all his strength into the effort, he hurled the man from him. As Fenton fell in a heap on the ground, his opponent instantly turned, thrust the woman back into the room, closed the door and quickly dropped its heavy protecting bar of wood into its place.

There was no light in the room now, and creeping quickly to the window near the door, the young soldier cautiously arose and peered into the yard. His head was only just above the sash, and he was prepared to drop back to the floor at the first sign of danger.

To his surprise Fenton was nowhere to be seen. How the man had vanished or whither he had gone, could not be seen. Satisfied that the outlaw must still be near the place, the young soldier, without leaving his position by the window, whispered to his companion, "Is the other door barred?"

"Yes."

"Are the windows fast?"

"I think so — every one."

"You watch on the other side while I stay here. We must know it if the villain tries to get near us. Keep out of sight, but don't let

him creep up on us without giving me word. He'll not try to use his fist this time. Have you a gun?"

"Only one and my husband took that."

"Well, keep watch. We must do our best."

A half hour elapsed and still not a sound had been heard to indicate that the outlaw was anywhere near. The disappearance of Fenton was unaccountable and the young soldier's perplexity increased as the moments passed. Had the man really departed or was he still hiding somewhere near, waiting for the attempt of his enemy to escape from the place? Had he gone to obtain the aid of his band? The suggestion was startling in its probability, and for a moment the young defender was alarmed. To succeed in throwing one man out of the house was a vastly different matter from successfully defending it against the attack of a score or more of Fenton's lawless gang.

"How far is Monmouth Court House from here?" he whispered to the woman.

"Ten or twelve miles."

"Straight road?"

"Yes."

"I can see that Fenton left my horse here."

"He's probably hiding, waiting for you to come out to get it."

"He may be, or he may have gone for some of his friends."

"We cannot hold the house if he has."

"That's what I think."

The woman did not reply, and several minutes passed before the young soldier spoke again.

"I think I'll venture," he suggested.

"I'm fearful for you."

"Keep the doors barred," said the young man, apparently ignoring what she had said.

"I'm going to the Court House for help."

"If you have decided to try, you'd better go out the other door."

"Yes, I thought of that. Be sure to keep your doors and windows all barred while I am gone."

Cautiously the young soldier lifted the bar which the woman had indicated, then slowly he drew back the door itself. The night was not dark, though there was not much light from the moon. Stepping quickly outside, he silently closed the door and heard the woman slip the bar into its place as he moved noiselessly along the side of the house. Difficult as it was for him to think of leaving the woman

and her suffering boy unprotected, the possibility of the return of Fenton with his ruffians was so much more alarming that he had not hesitated in making his decision. The greater peril that must arise if Fenton himself was hiding among the near-by trees was not forgotten, and as the young soldier darted from the shelter of the house he had already decided to attempt to approach his horse from the woods instead of moving across the open yard. Cautiously he crept from tree to tree, stopping for a moment as soon as he had gained each hiding-place, to listen and glance about the yard. The huge oaks and pines just beyond him almost seemed to deride him — they were so near and yet so far away. Only a few more yards remained to be crossed, but the crossing was filled with peril.

He could see that his horse was standing with head and neck stretched forward, peering curiously at him. A whinny of recognition might increase the young soldier's peril, and in the thought he arose and ran swiftly to the waiting animal.

Despite his self-control, the soldier's hands were trembling when he freed the faithful horse and began to lead him by the bridle. Not a sound came from the house or yard.

The horse, too, was still as he obediently followed his master. Back into the woods he moved steadily, the snapping branches still failing to arouse Fenton, if the outlaw really was hiding near the house.

With confidence increasing as he went forward toward the road, the young soldier at last passed with his horse into the long sandy highway. Still the silence was unbroken and no signs of the outlaw's presence were discovered. A glance at the low house behind him, and a thought of the lonely woman and her suffering boy, served to increase the determination of the young horseman to bring aid. Hastily springing into the saddle, he instantly started his horse at full speed and rode toward Monmouth Court House, where Light Horse Harry and his legion were sure to afford aid.

There were moments when, to the excited rider, it seemed that the gnarled and twisted branches of the pines and oaks were men waiting to greet his coming with a shot. Sometimes in the stillness of the night, he was certain he could discern the sounds of men in swift pursuit. At such times the speed of the running horse was increased and the flight was not unlike a swiftly passing shadow.

But pursuit and men watching for his coming were alike apparently imaginary, and before midnight the young soldier entered the camp of the legion at the Court House.

Solomon was awaiting his arrival and to him the story of the excited young soldier was speedily told.

“A guard for that woman and her boy must be detailed at once,” he said, as soon as he had made a few inquiries of his recent companion. “No! hold on,” he added; “you come with me and we’ll go straight to Light Horse Harry himself. He’ll tell us what to do.”

As no protest was made, the two men were speedily standing in the presence of the leader, and Solomon was telling their story. The young soldier was silent, though in the candle-light he was eagerly watching the man of whom he had heard many tales. In his own mind he was contrasting him with Mad Anthony Wayne, under whom he himself had served since the outbreak of the war.

The newcomer was at once impressed by the vigor and warmth of the dashing young leader; for Light Horse Harry Lee at this time was only twenty-eight years of age. His strength of body, as well as the impulsiveness of his generous nature, was at once manifest,

and the young soldier's heart instantly was drawn to him.

"I've heard of these dastardly pine-robbers," said the colonel, as soon as Solomon's story was told. "General Washington told me to clean out their nests if I had time before we started for the south. I wish I had the time too! It would do me good to give Moody and this Jim Fenton and all the others like them what they deserve. I'm afraid it can't be done, because we are about ready to start. Who is this man?" he added abruptly, as he turned to Solomon's companion.

"He'll have to tell you himself," replied the tall soldier. "I never set eyes on him before he joined us at Red Bank. He said he had a letter of some kind for you."

"Have you?" asked the colonel sharply.

"Yes, sir," said the young soldier, handing the officer a sealed letter as he spoke.

Abruptly breaking the seal, the officer held the candle near the letter which he read before he spoke again.

"All right, sir," he then said kindly. "I'm glad to see you, sir, and I sincerely hope you will be able to do all that is implied in this epistle. Do you know what the letter contains?"

"No, sir."

"Perhaps that is just as well. Then you yourself had a tussle with this outlaw, did you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And are still alive?"

"To the best of my knowledge and belief, I am," said the young soldier respectfully.

"That's good. It is n't every man on whom this Jim Fenton lays his hands who lives to tell the tale," said the colonel kindly. "At least that is the common report in Old Monmouth. What do you think is the best thing to be done now?"

"Send a guard at once to this house. Get Fenton if he can be taken, and if he can't, then send the family where they will be safe. Fenton has already lamed the woman by holding her foot over the fire, and now he has almost killed her boy. At least the mother thinks he was the one, though the little fellow himself has n't spoken yet."

"Do you think Fenton can be taken?"

"We can try."

"Do you want to be one of the men to try it?"

"I do."

"How many men ought to go?"

"Four or five."

"And he has twenty or more in his band?"

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"That is the report, colonel, but they are not all in the same place at the same time."

"Very good, sir. You have my orders to get this outlaw dead or alive. Do you want anything more than that?"

"Only four or five men, that's all. It is only an attempt, anyway, colonel. We may not succeed."

"You must be back here before to-morrow noon."

"I understand."

"Are there any men you specially want for the detail?"

"I'd like to have this man go," said the young soldier turning to Solomon. "Yes," he added, "I'd like the very men who came with me from Red Bank."

"You shall have them and shall start at once," said the colonel eagerly, not aware of the scowl of the lanky Solomon. "It's a desperate venture, young man," he added seriously. "If you get the outlaw, dead or alive, mind you, you'll do something to make every mother in Jersey rise up to bless you. You're to be back here by to-morrow noon at the latest."

CHAPTER V

TO TOBY'S PLACE

"WE'LL not be able to get this fellow and be back in camp by to-morrow noon," said Solomon, as he and his companion departed from the presence of Colonel Lee.

"We can try. I have only one thing to ask."

"What is that?"

"If Job goes with us he must not ride that mule of his."

"I'm afraid then he won't want to go at all."

"That will be better still. If he does go, get him a fresh horse. I think I'll have a fresh one too if you'll bring me one. I'd rather trust mine than any other, but he's pretty well winded now, so bring me another."

The lanky horseman scowled as he listened to the directions, but he made no protest. In a half hour the little band of four departed, led now by the young soldier whose name was still unknown by his companions. Job Buryman's alarm when he was informed of the ex-

pedition was so great that the excuses he offered for not accompanying his recent comrades were received and accepted in silence, and as a result he was left behind in the camp.

Mounted on fresh horses the party rode swiftly back over the sandy road, and soon after midnight arrived at the house in which the wounded boy and his mother had been left a few hours before.

"I was afraid we'd find the house burned to the ground," said the leader, when the dim outlines of the building were discerned. "I thought Fenton would be back here before we could come."

"He may be a bigger coward than you think," suggested John.

As the young leader, out of his own recent experiences with the outlaw, had formed a different conclusion, he did not feel called upon to correct his companion's statement, and led the way in silence until the band halted at the entrance to the yard.

Lifting his hand in token of silence the leader said in a low voice, "You three men wait here until I go up to the house and find out what has been done since I left."

Without waiting for a response he dismounted and, handing the bridle of his horse

to the scowling Solomon, he looked carefully to the priming of his rifle and then started cautiously toward the rear door. There was no light in the rude little building, and as he drew nearer, he stopped frequently to listen and look about him for indications of danger. Clouds were scudding across the face of the sky. The night air was chilly and the sound of the wind as it swayed the branches of the trees was weird and mournful. The resolute young leader, increasing his caution as he advanced, at last stood on the stone step in front of the door and rapped softly. As no response was given he repeated his efforts, and still the silence within the house was unbroken.

Somewhat mystified by his failure to arouse the inmates, the young soldier once more rapped on the door, and said in a low voice, "Open up! I'm a friend. Let me in."

He heard the bar cautiously lifted, and in a moment the door was opened. "I knew your voice as soon as you spoke," said the woman, whom the soldier recognized although he was unable to see her plainly. "Are you alone?"

"Yes, though I have friends near."

"Come in."

Entering and closing the door behind him,

the soldier said, "Has any one been here since I left?"

"No one, not even my husband."

"How is the boy?"

"He 'pears to be all right — or leastwise he's sitting up in that chair."

The soldier glanced quickly about him, but was unable to see any one in the darkness. "Better light a candle," he suggested.

As soon as his request had been complied with, he discovered the lad whom he had recently befriended seated in a low wooden chair. The boy's head was bandaged, but his eyes were bright with curiosity as he returned the gaze of the unexpected visitor.

"All right now?" inquired the soldier kindly.

"Yes, sir."

"What had happened to you when I found you yesterday?"

"Jim Fenton, th' old rascal, hit me on the head."

"What made him do that?"

"He told me to get out o' the Pines. I was a gettin' out as fast as I could, an' I could n't go no faster 'n that, could I?"

"Of course you could not. Where were you when you met him?"

"Over by Toby's."

"Where is Toby's?"

"'Bout three mile back in the Pines."

"What were you doing there?"

"Comin' back from the mill."

"You had a load of grist?"

"Yes, he did," spoke up his mother. "We knew something had gone wrong when the horses came running back home without him."

"It's a wonder Jim Fenton did n't take the horses an' wagon an' all," said the boy angrily.

"Perhaps he is waiting to get them next time," said the young soldier.

"More likely he won't wait, but he'll come here an' get 'em."

The young soldier laughed, and for a moment did not reply as he looked keenly at the angry lad. At last he said, "Do you feel all right now, Jimmie?"

"My name's Jim, not Jimmie. It's th' same 's father's," retorted the boy.

"So it is, so it is," laughed the visitor. "Of course I should have known that. Is that wagon all right now?" he added, turning to the woman.

"I think it is."

"Were the horses injured?"

"A bit barked, that's all."

Turning once more to the boy, the young soldier asked, "Does Fenton spend much of his time at Toby's?"

"You're right he does. Toby has a grogery."

"It's the worst place in the Pine Barrens!" spoke up the woman.

"Who is Toby?" asked the soldier.

"An old black nigger," replied the boy promptly.

"Would you like to have Fenton taken by the soldiers?"

"I would that! But they can't get him. He can lick any five of 'em with his hands tied behind his back. He can throw any man in old Monmouth."

"If you could see him have his hands and feet tied by the soldiers, would you like it?"

"Yes, sir, I would! But you couldn't get him. He'd tie your hands an' feet before you could shake a stick at him."

"Have you any straw in the barn?" inquired the soldier, apparently ignoring the lack of confidence in his personal prowess.

"There is n't any in the barn but there's a stack outside," answered the lad.



MY NAME'S JIM. NOT JIMMIE

"Good. Now you must go with us."

"Who? You mean me?" demanded the boy hastily.

"Yes. You won't have anything to do except to ride in the wagon. We're going to take your wagon and fill it with straw."

"What for?" asked the astonished lad.

"For Jim Fenton," laughed the visitor.

"He does n't want straw!"

"Does n't he? Well, we may have something besides straw for him. I don't like to take you away from home just now, after the way Jim Fenton has treated you, but you're the only one who can show us the road to Toby's place, or tell us when we get near it."

"I'll go," said the boy promptly, attempting to rise from his chair.

"Don't get up, don't try to do anything for yourself," said the young soldier quickly. "Just keep quiet where you are until I come for you. Are you willing for him to go with us?" he added, turning to the lad's mother.

"Yes," she answered quietly. "If you think it is necessary I'll not say anything against it."

In spite of her quiet manner her anxiety was manifest as she glanced again at the boy,

whose head was bound with cloths and whose pale face had an appeal all its own.

"I'm sorry. We have only a few hours in which to try to find this outlaw. We have orders to be back at the Court House by noon. If we succeed in getting the villain we'll do more for you than we could in any other way. And if we succeed, Jimmie here can take as many days as he wishes to rest. I'll do my best to protect him, but we simply must have some one to show us the way to Toby's."

"My name is not Jimmie, it's Jim," spoke up the lad quickly.

"That's true," said the young soldier with a laugh. "I think you'll do, Jim," he added lightly. "We'll get the better of the outlaw yet."

At once departing from the house the young leader assembled his men, and without fully revealing his plan, arranged the details. Two of the horses on which the men had ridden from the camp were hitched to the heavy farm-wagon, on which Jim had previously gone to the mill. The wagon-box was then filled with straw. When at last the arrangements were completed, the leader said, "Now I want you all to stretch out in the box and cover yourselves with the straw."

"What for?" inquired Solomon quickly.

"You'll understand a little later. I can't go into details now. Be sure to cover yourselves well, and every one must see that his rifle is ready for use any minute."

For an instant Solomon was on the point of protesting, but a word from John quieted him, and every man climbed into the box and stretched himself upon the bottom, and then the young leader carefully covered them all with the straw.

Satisfied that all the preliminary parts of his plan had been arranged, the young soldier led the team close to the kitchen door, called to the woman to come out and hold the horses, and then he entered the house. Lifting the youthful victim of the pine-robber's brutality in his arms, he carefully carried him to the wagon and gently placed him on the seat in front. Then, taking the reins from the hands of the woman, he climbed into the box and seated himself beside the lad who was to be the guide of the party in its desperate venture.

In silence the soldier drove out of the yard and turned into the road. A half hour afterwards, at Jim's direction, the young leader left the main road to follow a sandy way that

led into the pine woods. If Jim was suffering he betrayed no sign, and his interest in the expedition became marked as the party rode farther within the woods.

Several miles were covered without a word being spoken, and then the lad suddenly leaned toward the driver and whispered excitedly, "It's right ahead of us! Toby's place is in that clearing yonder!"

The light of the morning sun was now struggling through the trees. Not more than a hundred feet before him the young leader could see a little clearing in which were three or four small houses. The place was open, but stumps of fallen trees were standing in the foreground and the forlorn aspect of the spot was impressive even in the dim light of the early morning.

"Sure that's Toby's place, are you?" the soldier said in a whisper, as he glanced at the excited boy beside him.

"Yes! yes! I know it is!" replied the lad, his voice trembling in his excitement.

"All right then. Keep still and don't say a word unless you have to answer a question. Your face is covered with the bandages and no one will recognize you." Then, leaning backward in his seat, the driver whispered to

his concealed companions: "We're right near the place, boys. Keep covered and be ready for anything that may happen. If you have to shoot, then shoot straight and quick, but don't use your guns unless it is absolutely necessary."

The wagon was now in the open space, and the road led directly in front of the low building which the leader at once concluded must be Toby's groggery. No one as yet had been seen about the place, though both the driver and the lad beside him were intently watching.

Suddenly the boy whispered, "There he is! That's Jim Fenton coming round the corner of that house!"

The leader did not speak, but as he glanced in the direction indicated he beheld a huge man bare-headed and bare-armed, who at that moment had discovered the approaching wagon and had stopped short to gaze at it.

Apparently the result of his observations was not pleasing, for quickly advancing, he shouted, "Hi, there! Stop! Whar ye goin this mornin'?"

The driver, certain that he would not be recognized by the outlaw, at once obeyed, and the creaking wagon was still. "Over beyond here—to the mill," the young leader replied.

“What for?”

“What does one usually go to the mill for?”

“Don't many go this way for anything. Got any brandy?”

“Not a drop.”

“Did ye hear me? I want yer brandy!”

“We have n't any brandy.”

“Then I'll —” Fenton had come close to the forward wheel, and as he stared at the boy on the box he stopped abruptly as it became manifest that he had recognized the lad.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEPARTURE

FOR a moment the Baron of the Pines stared incredulously at the lad who was trembling on the seat. Fenton's face seemed to swell and his cheeks became a dull red, which was manifest beneath his deep coat of tan. The young driver was watching the outlaw intently, but he also noted the fact that the man before him apparently was alone, for no other had as yet issued from the low building which was known as Toby's groggery.

"Did n't I tell you never to come back here?" roared Fenton, speaking directly to the boy on the seat and ignoring his companion.

The lad with a whimper nodded his head in reply, and drew closer to the side of the driver.

"What are you doing here then? I've hung up your father over by the mill and I'll fix you too! When Jim Fenton says a thing he means every word of it!"

The outlaw stepped forward to lay his hands

on the boy before him. The soldier, convinced that Fenton had not recognized him as his contestant the preceding night, nevertheless was not unmoved by the sight of the powerful and angry man. A hand-to-hand contest now would be no light affair, he was fully aware.

"Don't touch him! The lad has not harmed you," said the driver in a low voice.

"What is it to you?" thundered the outlaw. "What are you doing in the pines, anyway? I'll attend to you just as soon as I have taught this imp that when I tell him not to come here he is not to come! He'll never come again!" he added savagely, as he placed one foot on the hub of the wheel, and with his hands reached forward to seize the lad.

Before he could grasp the boy, the driver suddenly leaped to his feet and with one powerful thrust sent the man sprawling upon the sand. The next moment the leader of the little band kicked one of the feet beneath the straw, — the signal previously agreed upon as the call to instant action by the concealed soldiers.

Instantly the lanky Solomon rose from the wagon, the long straws still clinging to every part of his body. Without waiting for a word from the leader, he drew his huge pistol and

fired at the outlaw, who by this time had arisen and was in the act of drawing his own weapon.

The loud report of Solomon's pistol broke in upon the silence of the morning, and before the smoke cleared, every one of the men, all of whom were now standing in the box of the wagon, saw that the desperate leader of the pine-robbers was lying prostrate on his face in the sand. A hasty examination revealed the fact that Jim Fenton never again would torture the helpless Jersey women or return with his gains to the caves in the Pine Barrens.

"Why did you do that?" said the young leader quietly to Solomon.

"To give the villain what he deserved—and to save you. It was just a question between you or Fenton. Mebbe I made a mistake," Solomon added dryly, "but that is the 'why' of it, and that's what you asked for."

"It was n't necessary."

"Was n't it? Did n't look that way to me."

"You might have covered him. That would have been enough."

"Would it?"

"Yes."

"That's your 'pinion. You're welcome to it," said Solomon bluntly. "Now, general, — I don't know the rest o' your name, — what are we to do next?"

The young leader turned and looked quietly at the ungainly soldier and Solomon instantly became silent, though his anger betrayed itself in the scowl that appeared on his face.

"Take the body and put it in the wagon-box," said the leader in a low voice. "Cover it with the straw. As soon as you have done that, get in the wagon and we'll start for the Court House."

For an instant Solomon seemed to hesitate; but then, winking solemnly at John as he did so, he called to Job, and the order was obeyed.

Meanwhile the young leader himself was peering about the woods, searching for any of Fenton's friends who might be approaching. Whether or not he discovered any he did not explain, as he said sharply, "Be quick, men! That's right! Now hold fast, for we're going back a good deal faster than we came!"

"Why? What's wrong, general?" inquired Solomon.

Without replying to the questions the young soldier drew the reins tightly, turned the wagon

about, and then began a swift return over the sandy road by which the little band had entered the region.

"Scared! Scared out of his boots!" muttered Solomon gleefully.

John Parvin replied by shaking his head, but did not speak. The horses were laboring hard in the heavy sand of the road and soon were wet from their exertions. The annoyance manifested by Solomon was shared by John now, as he saw his own horse showing plainly the effect of the swift pace. "Don't go so fast," John suggested to the driver. "You'll spoil the horses."

"Ought t' have Job's mule here for this job," muttered Solomon.

"Seems to me you can bray almost as well as Job's mule. We don't need but one on this trip," said the leader quietly, as he turned for a moment and looked intently at the one who had just spoken.

John laughed aloud and the tension of the moment was relaxed, though the dislike of Solomon for the leader became still more pronounced. Nor were any more protests made on the way back to the home of young Jim, where the wagon had been obtained. There, when the result of the expedition had been

explained to the waiting woman and the words Fenton had spoken concerning the fate of her husband had been told her, permission was received to take the wagon to the Court House, though no promise could be made that it ever would be restored to its rightful owner. The loss of the wagon, like the reported fate of her husband, apparently did not affect her, at least as far as any change in her manner was concerned. Having suffered so much already in the terrible war, she seemed to be incapable of suffering more.

The excitement in the camp at Monmouth Court House was intense when the little party returned early in the morning, and it became known that the feared and detested pine-robber had met the fate he so richly deserved. No one in Light Horse Harry's legion, however, knew until long afterward how the death of Fenton only served to increase the rage of his comrades in evil deeds, and how after the legion had departed, the unprotected people of the region suffered from the vindictive malice of the gangs of pine-robbers.

The two hundred and eighty men, of whom Lee's legion was composed, were not permitted to remain for the protection of the Jersey shore. General Greene had superseded Gen-

eral Gates in the command of the armies in the south, and at General Washington's special request Light Horse Harry and his men were ordered to join him. Preparations for the departure were already under way when Solomon, the day after the fall of Fenton, stood near John's quarters, talking with his friend.

"The foot-soldiers are to go to the head of the Chesapeake and there take boats. We are to go all the way by land," Solomon was saying. "I don't mind it myself —"

"What are you talking about then?" interrupted John with a laugh.

"I'm just explainin' to yo', suh."

"Go on."

"What I was intendin' toe say was that I can't see why the men that have horses can't go by boat too."

"Probably there are n't enough boats."

"That may be so, suh. I'm not complainin'. We'll be likely to see something on our way that may delay us. I understand that General Greene will be right glad toe have us join him just as soon as we can cover the ground between us."

"He'll need us and all the other good men he can get, too," said John soberly. "Lord Cornwallis is the best man the redcoats have

in the colonies. Solomon, what has become of that young chap that led us into the pines? I have n't seen him since we came back to the Court House."

"I have," replied Solomon scowling.

"Where is he?"

"I don't know. I went to report to the colonel last night and I found him there. What do you think? Light Horse Harry ordered me to leave and would n't listen to a word I had to tell him. He let that impertinent little whippet stay though, and ordered me away! And he only two days in camp! What do you think of that?"

"I think the colonel had a good reason."

"But listen, John!" urged Solomon. "I've been in the legion ever since it was formed. I've done my part every time. I never was asked to do a thing and drew back. At Brandywine, Light Horse Harry himself told me I was one of the men that he could count on. And now he turns me out for a little whipper-snapper whose name nobody knows."

"Perhaps the colonel knows who he is," suggested John consolingly.

He was well aware of the estimable traits in the angular soldier's character, and was not ignorant of those that seemed to indicate that

Solomon Garlick was little more than a child. Possessed, as Solomon undoubtedly was, of great physical strength, as well as of a certain faithfulness and tenacity that made him a valuable man in the legion, these characteristics at the same time were counterbalanced by a vanity that was childlike and a foolish sensitiveness to what he believed to be his rights and a demand for a due recognition of everything he did. The man was as peculiar in his mind as he was in his angular, awkward, ungainly body. John Parvin was one of the few who thoroughly understood all these peculiarities of his fellow-trooper, and because of this knowledge he had been able to save his friend from many of the threatening effects of Solomon's hasty and childish actions in the legion.

"I don't like the fellow!" snapped Solomon viciously. "He's too large for his nether garments."

"I never thought he was pompous," laughed John. "He seems to me to be a very quiet fellow. I don't even know his name."

"That's just the trouble. Nobody knows who he is. If he really was somebody, we'd all know it, as sure as yo're born."

"Well, he seems to have left the camp."

"He may not have left us."

"What do you mean?"

"We'll hear of him again. I feel that in my bones."

"Which bones?" laughed John.

"Every bone in my body."

"What makes you think so?"

"Job told me the fellow rode out of camp yesterday; and he did n't go back the way he came."

"Where did he go?"

"I can't tell yo', suh. All I'm tellin' yo' is that he started in the wrong direction fo' him."

"Did he start in the direction we're going?"

"He sholy did, suh. And what's more, John, he did n't wear any uniform either. You all know how sharp Light Horse Harry is about such things."

"Are you sure of that?" inquired John quickly.

"Job says he saw him with his own eyes."

"When was this?"

"Early yesterday mornin'."

"Did he go alone?"

"That's what Job reports."

"Job knows, I reckon. Never mind, Solomon. The fellow has gone, anyway, and that ought to be a consolation to you."

"Why, suh?" asked Solomon sharply.

"You won't have to let him throw you," said John banteringly.

"'Throw me!' 'Throw me!' He never saw the day when he could do that! And he never will! I wish he'd come back."

"Perhaps he will," laughed John.

Although neither of the two men understood at the time, yet John spoke more truly than he knew. At that moment the unknown young soldier was far from the camp at Monmouth Court House, but he was not alone. He was standing beneath a tree in the little colony of Delaware. He was hatless and coatless, and about him were six armed and angry men.

CHAPTER VII

WITH THE RAIDERS

"Now, then," the leader of the band was saying to the young man in their midst, "you have five minutes. If you have anything to say you'd better say it now. Forever after you'll hold your peace," he added brutally.

"I say just what I have said before."

"That did n't do any good."

"Then it won't do any good to say it again."

"We might as well go ahead, boys," said the leader, turning to his companions.

"Give the man another chance," suggested one of the band.

"Every chance there is," responded the leader. "The fellow was found this morning at the house of Jabez Gessler. He had a letter in his pocket for Nat Greene. He could n't explain who he is or what he is here for, and every one of us knows that Jabez is after us. He almost got us the last time we sold our cattle to the redcoats. This fellow must be in the deal or he would tell us more. If we're

caught, it means that we 'll swing, and I 'd rather have him do that than to have any of us."

"We may get into more trouble by taking the law into our own hands."

"'Law!' 'Law!' There is n't any law! We've as much right to say what the law is as anybody. If I want to sell cattle to the redcoats, who has any right to stop me?"

"The Congress thinks it has some rights."

"And I think I have as much right as they have. Who are they, anyway? A lot of bumpkins! I wish I had three or four of them right here now, where we've got this fellow! They 'd find they did n't count for much when they talked the law to Tom Haggard! I'm the law and the prophet, too!"

"You're the 'profit' all right, Tom," responded his companion dryly. "You talk too much, anyway! I'm for letting this fellow go."

"Let him go! What do you mean? After he has found out what he has? Why, man, we 'd have a hornet's nest about us."

"He says he is going south."

"He 'says' he is, but he might turn squarely around and complain of us —"

"He might give us his word."

"No man's word is good for anything these days."

"You judge every one by yourself, Tom."

"So I do."

"Suppose I took him home with me and kept him three or four days, and then saw that he went in the right direction. I tell you, Tom," the man added, as he became aware that his companion apparently was hesitating, "I don't want to add anything to what we've got to meet. We've enough to answer for, no matter how you look at it."

"Who'll make us answer? I'm not afraid —"

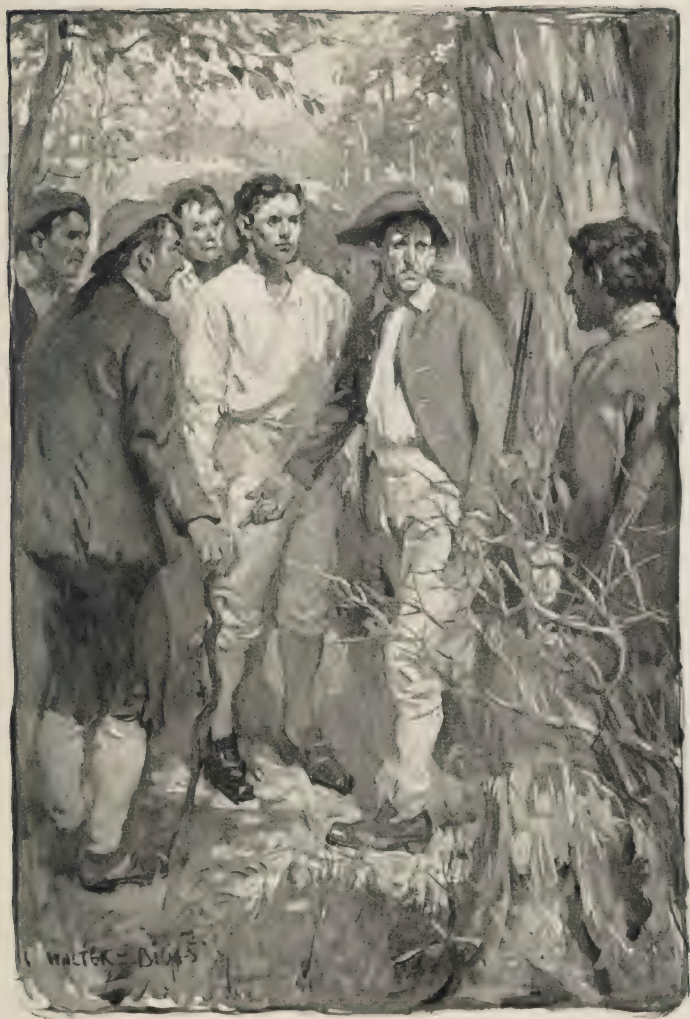
"Oh, I know what you mean. You're dead certain the redcoats won't ask us any uncomfortable questions as long as we provide cattle for them, and you're just as certain the rebels never will be able to back up their claims."

"That's it!"

"Well, I'm not so sure."

"What's scared you now?" demanded the leader sharply. "What's the odds? We'll let them snarl like a couple of dogs over a bone. What do we care as long as we're able to get cattle and get a good price for them?"

"Suppose the rebels win out?"



LET HIM GO! WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

"They won't."

"But suppose they should."

"They can't, I tell you!"

"Then what makes you so strong for hanging this fellow?"

"Because he found out what we were up to when he stopped at Jabez Gessler's. If he should report us, who knows but some of Light Horse Harry's legion might stop here long enough to pay us a visit. He's almost as crazy as Mad Anthony. Nobody knows what he'll do."

"We know what he'll be likely to do if he hears we have hanged one of his men."

"He won't know it. The fellow says he does n't belong to the legion, anyway. We can stick up a notice that the man is a spy, — he is n't in uniform, and he had this letter to Greene."

"You can't read it."

"I know readin' and spellin' and a bit of figurin', but the words in this letter are all twisted. I reckon no one will ever trouble us because we strung up the man that carried it. Besides, we'll be rid of him and he knows more than is good for him, to say nothing about us."

"Let him go, and I'll agree to look after

him three days and see that he does n't start in the wrong direction when he leaves."

"What do you say, boys?" inquired the leader as he glanced at his companions. "Shall we let him go or hang him?"

It became manifest at once that the feeling among the men was in favor of accepting the offer of their comrade to receive the prisoner into his care, and to become responsible for his safety. The feeling was deepened when one of the band referred to the fact that there was no plan for any further "dealings" in cattle for the coming week, and that the coming of Light Horse Harry's legion might make quiet on the part of the cattle-raiders something very much to be desired.

Reluctantly the leader at last assented to the proposal. Turning to the prisoner he said gruffly: "You've saved your bacon this time, young man, though you don't have me to thank for it. If you ever open your mouth about us, or tell any one what has happened to you to-day, we'll follow you to the ends of the earth and you won't get off so easy next time! Understand what I say?"

"I think I do," replied the young prisoner quietly, as he gazed steadily at the leader.

"You agree?"

“Agree to what?”

“What I say.”

“I’ll go with this man, of course I will, if that is what you mean.”

“And give your word that you will not try to get away for three days and won’t say a word to anybody about what Jabez Gessler said about us?”

The young prisoner hesitated a moment before he replied. He was thinking of the time, the preceding evening, at the house of Jabez, whom he had previously known, and of whose loyalty to the colonies he had no question. Jabez had related to his young visitor some of the dastardly deeds of the gangs that infested Delaware — bands of men not unlike those in the Jersey barrens with which the young soldier already had experienced some difficulties of no uncertain character. In Delaware, however, the lawless men made a specialty of stealing cattle which they collected and drove to the camps of the redcoats. The rewards for such practices were so great that the peril which threatened from the enraged farmers of the region was looked upon as slight in comparison. The desperate deeds of the reckless cattle thieves had by this time so aroused the patriots of the region that the

danger of the outlaws recently had become much greater. The recklessness of the bands had increased in a corresponding degree.

It was due to this fact that the young soldier, when a brief time after he had resumed his journey from the house of Jabez Gessler, was startled when, on a lonely road, he found himself face to face with a band of ten men who were driving a half-dozen cattle before them. If he had turned about, he might easily have escaped; but as he was in no mood to do anything of that kind, he had pushed forward, hoping to pass the men without any parleying.

The appearance of the young horseman, however, had aroused the suspicions of the outlaws, at whose command he had halted, and, deeming discretion the better part of valor, had also submitted to the search which was made of his person. The discovery of the letter he was carrying had still further aroused the already suspicious band, and his statement that he had just come from the house of Jabez Gessler had increased their fears. Whether or not they really intended to carry out their threat and to hang him the young man did not know. His apparently quiet submission to their demands had in a measure deceived

them, and not one of them was aware of the desperate efforts to free himself which the powerful young soldier would have made before he would have suffered the penalty with which they threatened him. Even now, when the prospect of release was before him, his quiet bearing was unchanged and the suspicions of his captors had not been aroused.

"You must not ask too much of me," he said quietly.

"You're a cool one," laughed the leader. "We shan't stand here to parley with you. Which do you want — the end of the branch of that tree yonder or going with Sim Higgins?"

"I'm going with Sim Higgins."

"And keep your mouth tight shut?"

"I'll take my horse, if you please."

"Your horse? You're cool — cooler than a cucumber. You won't ever see that horse again."

"I want my horse," said the young soldier quietly.

"And I tell you you can't have it."

"You'd better let me have it."

The young soldier's voice was low, though there was an expression in his face that was different from that which had been there a moment before.

"What'll you do if you don't get it?"

"Probably *I* shall do nothing."

"Who will?"

"Light Horse Harry."

"What has he to do with it?"

"His legion will be here to-morrow at the latest. He stopped at Monmouth Court House long enough to get rid of Jim Fenton —"

"What did he do to Fenton?" broke in the man quickly.

"Shot him," replied the young soldier quietly, though he was keenly watching the face of the man before him as he spoke.

"Is that honest?"

"It surely is."

"How do you know?"

"I led the men that got him in the pines."

"You led them? That's a good one," roared the man. Nevertheless an increased respect for the boy before him instantly became manifest in his bearing. As the prisoner did not speak, the man continued: "Why did Light Horse Harry choose you? Did n't he have any better men than you in his legion?"

"I am not a member of his legion."

"I thought you said just now you were."

"No. All I said was that he wanted me to get Fenton — and we got him. My advice to

you is, not to stir up Light Horse Harry here in Delaware. He will chase you to the Gulf if he has to ; for you know as well as I do that he does n't give up and he is n't afraid of anything or anybody."

"He'd never know what had been done to you."

"Would n't he? You might go back and ask Jabez Gessler."

"What has he to do with it?"

"You'd better ask him. Now if you'll let me have my horse, I'll promise you that I will go with Sim Higgins and I'll leave Delaware before I have a chance to say a word to any one. That ought to satisfy you."

"But it does n't!" roared the leader. "I'm not afraid of Light Horse Harry and the whole of his legion! If you are what you say you are, I reckon the redcoats will pay as much for you as they would for a yearling. I'm glad you told us what you did. You're worth more alive than you are dead. That letter we found on you will be worth a guinea at the very lowest. No. You shall not be strung up, and you shan't go with Sim either. You come with me."

As he spoke, the leader advanced to seize his prisoner by the arm ; but before he could

act he was suddenly lifted from the ground and flung bodily against the trunk of a near-by tree. As the man fell, the recent prisoner ran quickly forward to the place where his horse was tied to a low sapling.

CHAPTER VIII

A LOSS

UNSEEN by the angry raider, a horseman was approaching from beyond the woods in the distance. The young prisoner, however, had seen the man and had instantly recognized the animal he bestrode as Job's strange beast. The sight of Job had instantly caused the fearless young soldier to conclude that his recent companion was not alone. Hastily concluding that Light Horse Harry's legion could not be far distant, he had quickly acted and sent the leader sprawling to the ground.

Before the man could recover from his fall or his astonished comrades could act, the prisoner had again rushed upon the fallen man, and seizing him in his hands lifted him to his feet and, holding him, said gently, "Yonder are some of Light Horse Harry's men now. If you want to meet them this is your chance."

The astonished cattle thieves glanced hastily in the direction indicated, where Job and some

of his comrades now could be seen approaching. Before the leader of the band was able to give any directions to his fellows, the men had fled, vanishing almost as quickly as if the earth had opened and swallowed them.

"Let me go! Let me go, I tell you!" roared the leader, as he struggled to free himself from the vice-like grip of his "prisoner."

"But you are not afraid of Light Horse Harry and all his legion," said the young soldier, as he still held the terrified man in his grasp. "That is what you said just now."

"Let me go! Let me go!" repeated the leader, as he redoubled his efforts to break the hold of his captor.

"Hi! Job!" shouted the young soldier, — "come here! I want you!"

The astonished Job, hearing his name called from the woods by the roadside, instantly reined in his steed and stared blankly at the place from which the startling hail had come.

"Here I am, Job! Come in here and get this man."

The voice that called was not alarming and Job's fears apparently departed.

"Where are you? Who is it?" he shouted.

"One of your friends. Come on! Bring your mule! Don't wait!"

"I'm coming," responded Job, as he quickly dismounted, and leading his strange beast by the bridle, cautiously drew near the place from which the hail had come. In a brief time he entered the open space among the trees, and then stopped and stared at the startling sight before him. The cattle-thief had ceased struggling now that he found himself helpless in the powerful grasp of his captor. Indeed, he hardly raised his eyes to look at the newcomer. His labored breathing alone betrayed the excitement that possessed him.

"What in the world —" began Job, as he recognized the young soldier.

"Don't stop to talk, Job," interrupted his friend. "Give me a strap. Take your bridle; take anything that will hold."

Job, greatly excited, at once unfastened a part of his rope bridle, and approaching the two men handed it to the young captor.

"Don't stand there like a wooden man!" exclaimed the soldier. "Tie this fellow's hands while I hold them. There! That's right!" he added, as Job obediently did as he was told. "Now hold your mule while I throw the fellow on its back."

First securing the letter which had been taken from him, the young soldier lifted the cattle-

thief to his feet. To all appearances the captive had abandoned all thoughts of resistance, for he did not even struggle when the powerful young soldier lifted him in his arms and placed him on the back of the mule. Another small piece of rope was obtained from the young soldier's outfit, and with it the feet of the prisoner were tied beneath the body of the mule.

"Now I'll tie his hands round the mule's neck," suggested the unknown young soldier, as he at once untied the band by which the prisoner's hands were held. "Look out, Job! You hold his hand on that side while I hold the one on this," he added quickly, as the prisoner began to struggle once more as soon as his hands were freed.

Suddenly the man struck Job a severe blow in the face, and wrenching his other hand from the grasp of the soldier he slapped the mule viciously on its neck and shouted, "Get away! Go on!"

Before the two men recovered from the sudden attack, the mule bounded forward and entered the woods close by.

"Take after him, Job! That's Tom Haggard, the biggest cattle-thief in Delaware! We must n't let him get away, whatever happens!

Come on ! We can hear the mule ! Come on !
Come on ! ”

Instantly the two men darted into the woods in pursuit of Job's frantic steed. The crashing of the underbrush betrayed the direction of the flight, and following as best they were able, the pursuers leaped over the fallen logs and made their way through the tangled bushes.

“ Call to your mule, Job ! ” said the ungainly man's companion. “ Stop him ! Don't let him get away ! Call him ! Call him ! ”

Job's calls, however, apparently were without avail, for the sounds of snapping branches became fainter and soon ceased altogether. When a half hour had elapsed, they could no longer be heard, and the two pursuers found themselves in unfamiliar woods, far from the place where the pursuit had begun.

“ He's gone — and my mule, too, ” said Job disconsolately, as he and his breathless companion at last halted. “ What did you let him get away for ? ”

“ It was n't because I wanted him to go. I thought you had his hand — ”

“ I did, but he pulled it away, ” broke in Job.

“ So it seems, ” said his companion dryly.

"Well, I was as much to blame as you," he added. "The man has gone —"

"And so has my mule!"

"You can get another."

"Not like mine," replied Job, shaking his head dolefully. "That mule knew as much as some men. I'd had him since he was a colt. I had him trained so that he would kick in a door if I told him to. He'd bite the head off a copperhead, he'd stamp in the ground, he'd tear off the roof — and jump! Why, that mule would clear a six-rail fence if he was up against it!"

"I believe it. I believe everything you say, but it does n't do us any good now. The cattle-thief has gone and he's the new owner of your mule."

"I've just got to have that mule! Why, he's one of the family."

"How'll you get him?"

"I don't know. I've got to get him — that's all there is to it."

"I must go back or I'll lose my horse."

"That's right! That's the way! Get me off here in the woods, lose my mule for me, and then leave me alone! Why didn't you hang on to the man when you had him?"

"It's too bad, Job. The fault is mine. I

never once dreamed the fellow would make a fight after we had his feet tied."

"You weren't strong enough," said Job solemnly.

"Perhaps I was n't. Job, are the men of the legion close behind you?"

"They were. My mule made a break a few miles back, and when he does that I know there is n't any use in trying to hold him, so I had to let him have his head."

"Too bad. You tell Colonel Lee all about it and tell him too that Tom Haggard, the biggest cattle-thief in Delaware, has got him. I have n't any doubt that Light Horse Harry will stop for a day or two and scour the country. You know what he did for Jim Fenton."

"Yes, I know. But Jim Fenton didn't get away."

"That's right, and Tom Haggard did."

"He would n't if you had n't let him."

"I reckon that's right."

"He would n't if you had n't helped him."

"Helped him? What do you mean?"

"Solomon thinks you are dangerous."

"Oh, he does, does he? Just who is it that is in danger from me?"

"He says nobody knows who you are."

"*He* does n't, that's so. Is Solomon nobody?"

"You would n't dare say that to his face. Solomon can throw almost every man in Light Horse Harry's legion."

"Good for Solomon!" said the young soldier, his eyes twinkling as he spoke. "Solomon is a good man — of his kind."

"He is that," said Job fervently. "When he hears how I lost my mule he'll be madder at you than ever."

"I did n't lose your mule, Job."

"I'm not so sure o' that. You got me out here in the woods and then let this man — you say it's Tom Haggard, though I don't know whether he is or not — get away and take my mule with him."

"You think I was helping Tom Haggard?"

"I'm not sayin' what I think. I'm tellin' you what Solomon Garlick may say."

"Let the wise man say what he wants to; it won't bother me. I must leave you now, Job, and go back for my horse. I ought to be forty miles farther on, and I could have been too, if it had n't been for Tom Haggard and his gang of cattle-thieves. They came pretty close to hanging me. You wish they had, don't you?" the young soldier added quizzically as he noticed the silence of his companion.

"I'm not saying anything."

"That's when you're most eloquent and dangerous, Job," laughed the young soldier. "Don't forget to tell the colonel what I told you."

"That you won't stay to help me get my mule back?"

"I can't. I must go on."

"Maybe I'll go where the mule is."

"Don't stay here. Come on back with me and tell the colonel. He may be willing to help you and I know he'd like to get Tom Haggard."

"He might have had him if you had n't let him get away with my mule."

The young soldier looked keenly at Job a moment, then laughed and turned abruptly away. Nor did he glance back at his disconsolate companion as he ran swiftly back to the place where his horse had been left. Apparently Job's troubles were speedily forgotten, and even the escape of the cattle-thief ceased to trouble him, for as soon as he found his horse he instantly mounted and rode swiftly southward, not even waiting for a word with the advance guard of the legion.

Late at night, horse and rider both wearied, a stop was made at a farmhouse where the welcome that was given implied either

a previous acquaintance or a common interest.

Refreshed and thoroughly rested, he resumed his journey the following morning and steadily held to the southward course. Four more days and nights were passed in a similar manner, and then the young soldier's actions became more guarded. Frequently he turned away from the road to avoid the possibility of meeting people. He made his selection of quarters for the night with increased care. No one, in a land that was strange to him, was to be accepted as a friend without first proving his case.

It was the fifth night after the young soldier's departure from Delaware, when he was riding on a lonely road through a hilly country where the occasional houses he passed were rude and the people he chanced to meet were as curious concerning him as he was guarded or suspicious of them. Rain had been falling and there were no evidences of any immediate end to the storm. The horse, too, was as muddy and wearied as his rider.

The young soldier, convinced that in the coming darkness his way would be as difficult to find as it would be to pass safely in the storm, was looking keenly before him hoping

to discover some place of refuge for the night. The last habitation he had passed was at least two miles behind him, and he was regretting now that he had not tried to obtain lodgings there.

Suddenly, not far in front, he beheld a sight which instantly caused him to stop and look intently at the cabin which at first seemed to be on fire. From the open door a blaze of light could be seen, while from the low chimney a roaring flame was leaping. As he drew nearer, however, he heard the sound of voices, one of which he recognized as that of a woman, and it was manifest that an encounter of some kind was taking place. The woman's voice seemed to be that of one who was more angry than alarmed, and consequently the first impulse of the young soldier to rush forward to her aid was checked. Leading his horse within the shelter of the near-by trees he tied him there, and then cautiously approached the cabin. He soon was able to peer through the open door, and the sight which greeted his eyes instantly aroused him and he ran swiftly toward the place.

CHAPTER IX

THE WAR WOMAN

“WHAT’S wrong?”

Instantly the woman whose question the soldier had heard, and the three men in the low room, turned and gazed in astonishment at the newcomer. The young soldier was at once aware that the woman before him was large — at least six feet tall — and that apparently her physical strength was in keeping with her size. He was also aware that her hair was red, and that she was cross-eyed — more so than any one he had ever seen. As for the men, not one of them was a match for the angry woman, but the fact that there were three of them present seemed to afford a measure of courage to the little band. The newcomer had no difficulty in drawing his conclusion that trouble of some kind was at hand, and that the three men were quarreling with the angry and fearless woman. That she was in peril did not now impress the young soldier, and his first feeling of alarm passed as he returned the gaze of the startled group before him.

"I reck'n this mought be th' man yo' all were a-lookin' fo'," suggested the woman as she turned once more to her visitors.

"No," answered one of the men. "Yo' know we want Sam Bliven."

"Well, Sam was yere this evenin'."

"He was? Why did n't yo' say so befo'?"

"Yo' all did n't ask me. Sam came a-ridin' up to th' bars on the other side o' th' house and told me three o' th' most low-down tories in th' colony was a-chasin' him. Most like he was a-referrin' to you all."

"What did you do with him?" demanded the angry man.

"I went fo' to pull down th' bars an' I let him ride straight through th' house. I told him he must 'git'; an' he got."

"Where did he go?"

"Not seein' I can't tell yo'. I reckon though if you all was to go down t' th' swamp, where Pete, my husband, an' a few o' th' neighbors have a camp, you all might hear somethin' 'bout Sam."

"Did you tell him to go where Pete is?"

"I suggested it," replied the woman, smiling grimly as she spoke.

"Nancy, you ought to be shot!"

"Mebbe you all know some one who'd like

to have the job!" The huge woman threw back her shoulders as she spoke and her twisted eyes seemed almost to flash in the dim light. Even her brilliant-hued hair seemed to assume a deeper tinge of red, and in her entire bearing she became the war woman, as she was familiarly known in the region.

"You'll catch it, Nancy, as sure's yo're born if you don't quit helpin' the rebels, th' way you've been doin'."

"I didn't stop t' ask Sam Bliven whether he was a rebel or a tory. When he told me you all were after him, a-threatenin' to hang him just as soon as you caught him, I did n't wait t' hear any mo'. And Sam Bliven is your own sister's boy, too! You all ought to be 'bout better business, Jonathan Whitney. Hangin' your own sister's boy! Bah!"

"He's a-goin' in for Sumter's band," said the man, somewhat abashed.

"What dif'rence does that make?"

"We're for the king!"

"Yo' all mean yo're fo' yourselves," sniffed Nancy scornfully. "Pretty kettle o' fish, when a man tries fo' to hang his own flesh and blood!"

"We must stand fo' the rights o' the king, Nancy."

“King! King! What good’s the king to the likes o’ you all? He’ll take the last porker off your place. This Lord Cornwallis has sent his redcoats to my place. Only day before yest’day they come here and took the last pig I had. What do I care for such a king’s that?”

“Lord Cornwallis is not to blame. He’s here to put down this wicked rebellion against His Majesty, God bless him!”

“He needs the blessin’s of such men as you all!” retorted Nancy disdainfully. “Men that are willin’ toe hang their own sister’s boys!”

“He’s a rebel, I tell you! He’s going toe join Sumter an’ fight along with Greene.”

“Good for th’ boy! I glory in his spunk! If I’d ’a’ known that when he rode up here this evenin’ I’d a done more fo’ him. But if you all really want toe find Sam you mought run across him somewhere down in th’ swamp. Mebbe Pete or some o’ the men with him will help you all toe find him,” laughed Nancy scornfully.

“Pete will get what he deserves!” said the man angrily.

“That’s what I’m a-hopin’. Maybe you all will get some o’ yours too, if you’ll go down toe the swamp. I can tell you jist where the

camp is an' I reck'n you all won't have any trouble in findin' it."

"We'll find it all right enough when the time comes."

"I know when that will be."

"When?"

"Never. You all won't get near enough t' Pete toe let him draw a bead on any one o' you! You all know that's well as I do."

"Who is this fellow?" inquired the man, as he turned to the newcomer, whose presence had been recognized, although in the excitement of the moment little had been said to him. The young soldier had requested the privilege of standing in front of the blazing fire of logs in the fireplace. Permission had been bluntly granted, and though the newcomer was closely watched, the conversation which had been interrupted by his entrance had been speedily resumed.

"I don't know him from Adam," retorted Nancy. "Ask him."

"Who are you?" said the man who had been talking to the woman, as he now turned and faced the stranger.

"I don't belong here," replied the young soldier quietly.

"Tell us who you are," again demanded

the man, made bolder both by the words and the quiet manner of the visitor.

“No one you know.”

“I can tell better after I know your name.”

“My name won’t do you any good. I was caught in this storm and just stopped to dry out. I heard your voice —”

“Where did you come from?” interrupted the man.

“Must I tell you?”

“Yes.”

“Well, then, I came from Light Horse Harry’s legion.”

“Is he near here?” demanded the man, manifestly startled.

“Yes,” replied the young soldier.

“How near?”

All three men were crowding about the newcomer now, and their excitement or alarm was plainly visible.

The young soldier glanced at Nancy, and her interest and manifest friendliness were apparent as she nodded her head. That she was looking directly at him the young man was by no means assured. Never before had he seen a person so cross-eyed. To him it almost seemed as if each eye might do the duty of its fellow if occasion demanded.

"I can't tell you that," he said, replying to the question of the man.

"How do you know he's near, then?"

"I left the legion not very far behind me."

"Then you belong to Light Horse Harry's legion, do you?"

"I told you I left it not very far away."

"Is it coming here?"

"I can't tell you."

"How many men has he?"

"Enough to make Sumter and Marion and Greene glad."

"How many?"

"I didn't count them."

"Has he a hundred?"

"A hundred! Why, man, you'll think every continental in the colonies has rushed to follow the colonel! They're fighters, too, every one of them. There was a man in Jersey — a pine-robber who just spent his time robbing and torturing the women and children when the men were in the army. Light Horse Harry heard of it and — Well, I have n't any need to tell you more," he added, shaking his head.

"What was done to the robber?"

"He's dead — that's all you need to know. Then Colonel Lee stopped in Delaware long

enough to hang some of the cattle-thieves there. Now he's come on here and — ”

“Lord Cornwallis will clip Harry Lee's wings.”

“Yes?”

“Indeed, he will! Do you think the legion will be here soon?”

“I am sure it will.”

“How soon?”

“In a short time.”

“To-night?”

“No.”

“We must get word to the camp,” said the man, turning eagerly to his companions.

“I thought you wanted to hang this Sam Bliven first,” suggested the young soldier.

“We'll get Sam just as we have got you.”

“You have got me then, have you?”

The young man was speaking quietly, but he was by no means indifferent to his surroundings. The bolder course had appeared to him to be the safer, and, in addition, he was not unwilling that the coming of Light Horse Harry's legion should become known in the region.

“Yes, we've got you. You're coming with me. You two,” said the man as he turned to his companions, “stay here till morning. If

Sam doesn't show up by that time, both of you join me at — You know where I'll be," he added as he hastily interrupted himself.

"I reck'n there 's no such need o' hurryin'," drawled one of the three men. "We all 'll have time fo' Nancy toe get us a snack, I'm thinkin'. I'm hungry."

"I told you the cowardly tories and red-coats have stolen th' last porker we had on the place," spoke up Nancy sharply. "There is n't a bite fo' Pete, toe say nothin' o' feedin men what are tryin' toe hang their own flesh an' blood."

The war woman's crooked eyes seemed to flash in her excitement. The young soldier smiled as he glanced at her, but he did not move from his position in front of the fire.

"Go out and look 'round th' barn. Maybe you will find something left yet," laughed the man who had been talking to Nancy. "I reck'n there isn't any such towerin' need o' runnin' away. Light Horse Harry won't be along for a right good spell, I'm thinkin'. Go on out and look for somethin' that Nancy can cook for us."

The war woman did not speak, though her eyes were by no means more friendly in their expression when the man, who had been bid-

den to make the search, departed from the log-house.

While he was gone, the leader resumed his questioning of the young soldier, but the information he received was not of a character that added largely to his knowledge.

In a brief time the man returned with a turkey-gobbler on his shoulder.

"That's what I found," he laughed, as he flung the dead bird on the floor. "I reckon Nancy'll be obliged toe me for findin' th' turkey when she thought there was n't a livin' thing left on the place."

"That's th' last lone turkey I raised!" exclaimed Nancy. "Cook that bird fo' you all? I'd rather see you all starve! No, I won't! I'll cook th' turkey fo' you," she abruptly added, as she instantly rolled back the sleeves of her dress preparatory to undertaking the task.

"I reckoned you all'd come toe your senses, Nance," laughed the leader.

"Goin' toe have this young man fed, too?"

The war woman glanced at the newcomer as she spoke, and to him it seemed as if there was a meaning in the look she gave him, though what she was trying to show him he was unable to conjecture.

"No!" replied the leader shortly. "Shut him in the cellar while we're a-feastin'. Bring up the jug, Nancy, while we're waitin'."

"Leave him here in the room," suggested Nancy.

"Shut him in th' cellar!" rejoined the leader.

"Jest's you all say," murmured the war woman. Turning to the prisoner she beckoned him to follow her, as, with a blazing pine knot in her hand, she led the way to the cellar beneath the little house.

"We'll fix these men!" she whispered savagely to the young soldier, as with him she descended the rude steps outside the house. "Do you know how to blow on a conch-shell?"

"Yes."

"Well, after yo've waited an hour or so you run down toe the spring. It's just below the barn. You all can't help findin' it. When you get the shell you all blow three times on it."

"What for?"

"Do as I tell you an' you'll find out, I reckon," replied Nancy sharply.

"What shall I do after I've blown?"

"Come back to the house."

"Suppose the men find I'm gone. They might hurt you."

“I reckon you better leave me toe look after myself. I’ll take this jug up toe the cowards, an’ that ’ll keep ’em busy, I reckon. You all tend toe your part an’ I’ll look after mine.”

Two hours later three blasts from the conch-shell rang out, and the young soldier flung the shell from him as he ran swiftly back to Nancy’s house of logs.

CHAPTER X

NANCY'S GUESTS

ALTHOUGH he was not aware of the meaning of the blasts he had given, the young soldier knew that he had not been bidden to do as he had done without some plan on the part of the war woman. His excitement accordingly was intense as he drew near the little house. From the sounds he heard within, he concluded that his warning either had not been heeded or had not been heard by Nancy's guests. They were shouting and singing, and their actions implied that the jug which Nancy had been bidden to bring from the cellar was already having its effect upon her self-invited visitors.

From the side of the house nearest him a blaze of light came through a small opening between the logs. Darting to the spot the young soldier was about to kneel and look through the opening, when he stopped abruptly as the light was shut off. Something was thrust through the opening, which proved to be a long musket that dropped at his feet.

In a moment the light was shining through the opening once more. The soldier knelt, and grasping the gun which had so unexpectedly fallen at his feet, he again looked into the room.

He could see the men now. Seated about the table, they were all doing ample justice to the dinner which Nancy had cooked for them. The jug, too, was still passed from hand to hand, and the noisy shouts were redoubled.

For a moment he could not see Nancy, then the excited watcher was startled as he discovered her on the opposite side of the room. She had walked slowly backward to the place, apparently grasped in her hands something which he was unable to see, and now with her face still turned to her guests, she was slowly backing toward the opening in the wall through which the young soldier was excitedly gazing. What was the war woman doing? What did her strange actions imply? What was that which she was holding behind her broad back? The questions flashed into the mind of the eager observer and in a moment were answered. The men in the room, confident in their feeling of security, before they had seated themselves about the table

had placed their muskets together against the wall opposite their positions at the table. The war woman, apparently attending to the wants of her visitors, meanwhile, had not been unmindful of her opportunity. When the noise of the feasting indicated that the men were more interested in their dinner than in the precautions for their safety, she had stealthily walked backward to the place where the guns had been placed and taken one in her hands. Then, facing the shouting feasters, she had slowly backed to the opening which she herself doubtless had made in the chinking between the logs, and gently thrust the weapon through the hole and dropped it upon the ground outside the house.

Convinced that his conjecture had been correct, the young soldier with renewed interest watched the woman whose hands were now behind her, holding fast to another gun.

Slowly she approached the hole in the wall and the excitement of her silent watcher redoubled. Alternately he looked at the men, at the table, and at the woman, who was slowly approaching the place where he was watching her every motion. Her face was still toward the men, but her feet were cautiously moving backward. Nearer and nearer she came, and

then pausing a moment, she thrust the muzzle of the gun through the hole. Instantly the young soldier grasped the weapon and drew it to him. At first he could feel the sudden tightening of the woman's grasp, for doubtless she was surprised at the unexpected aid. Quickly, however, she appeared to understand, and without changing her position permitted the gun to be withdrawn.

"Hi, there, Nancy!" roared one of the "guests." "Have n't you got another jug? We all can almost see the bottom of this one!"

"No!" snapped the war woman. "That's the last gobbler on the place and that's the last jug in the house! You all ought to be satisfied with your doin's! We uns have n't anything more."

"Look around, Nancy, my good woman," said the leader thickly.

"Don't you all be so 'tarnal sure I'm a good woman," snapped Nancy. "Even if I was, an' I'm not sayin' as how I am, I'm thankful I'm not *your* good woman."

"That's all right, Nancy," replied the man. "Yo're not so bad as you look."

"Yo' all better eat your dinner and clear out!"

"We don't like toe leave, Nance."

"If yo' all will take my advice you'll do it right smart. Maybe there'll come a time when 'leavin'' 'll be what you all 'd rather do than anything else in th' wide world. You all better do 's I am a-tellin' yo'."

"What's that?"

"Clear out!"

"Too much o' th' turkey left," replied the man, shaking his head as seriously as if he were pondering the suggestion of the war woman.

"Then don't blame me if yo' all get what yo' deserve."

"Hi, there! Do you all see what the vixen is a-doin'?" abruptly shouted another of the men at the table as he hastily arose.

In a moment his companions also were standing, prepared to rush upon their hostess. They were sobered, however, by the sight which greeted them, and for a moment they all halted as they faced the fearless woman, who now stood before them, the last of the muskets at her shoulder and her face expressive of her determination.

Her huge size (for, as has been said, Nancy was more than six feet in height and weighed over two hundred pounds), her red hair, which now was streaming down her shoulders, her

eyes, flashing and yet so crossed that every one of the three men before her was certain she was aiming straight at himself, all combined to make the moment tense.

“You all stop ! Stop right whar yo’ be ! If one o’ you takes another step for’ard I’ll drop him in his tracks !”

Plainly the threat was no idle one, and the half-sobered men were aware of it. Every one abruptly stopped where he was standing. Nancy, her back toward the wall and standing in front of the men, the gun still at her shoulder, her finger on the trigger and her eyes almost gleaming, as she stood facing the men, each one of whom was convinced that she had selected him as the target of her first shot, was not to be ignored.

To the excited young soldier, who, as he looked through the hole in the chinking, was able to see all that was going on within the room, the scene under different circumstances would have been one to make him shout with glee. The men, ashamed of their cowardice and yet all alike convinced that any forward movement would instantly bring the discharge of the musket in Nancy’s hands, were almost abject in their fear. The war woman alone was almost a match for them all.

The young soldier had watched the woman throughout her efforts to secure the third of the guns which had been placed together against one side of the room. She had successfully grasped it, and had then begun to move across the room just as she had previously done. The withdrawal of this musket would leave the men defenseless, and the watching young soldier had been eager for the time to come when, with the guns in possession of Nancy and himself, they two would be more than a match for the three who had invaded the home, insulted its mistress, and now were almost at the mercy of the war woman and her unknown friend. All the latter's expectations, however, had suddenly been overthrown when the men at the table discovered what the woman was doing. A glance at the place where their guns had been left had revealed the loss of them all except the one in Nancy's hands. Their united rush from the table had been abruptly checked by her threatening words and far more threatening actions and attitude. The moment was so tense that it almost seemed to the watching young soldier that he could hear the heart-beats of the Tories, even as he was positive his own were so loud that his enemies must hear the sounds.

Not long could the conditions be maintained he thought. He looked again at the war woman who was standing almost as motionless as if she had been turned into stone. The men before her, too, were like parts of a tableau, for not one ventured even to change his position, nor did any one dare to start for Nancy, convinced as each was that her aim was at him. The young soldier, almost fascinated by the sight, was staring at the men and the woman almost as if he had no part in the scene, until it suddenly flashed upon him that if the bold woman was to receive aid he must be the one to give it. Instantly he stooped and seized the second gun, which he had placed against the wall of the cabin ; but as he did so his ears were saluted by the loud report of guns within the house. The shots were followed by hoarse shouts and calls, while groans and cries were mingled in the confusion.

Bending forward he endeavored to peer into the room, but it was filled with smoke and he was unable to distinguish one object from another. Without hesitation he instantly turned and, still holding his guns in his hands, darted around the corner of the cabin toward the door.

In the midst of the smoke, the room, to the excited young soldier, appeared to be filled with men. From the sounds that came from one corner he judged that a struggle of some kind was occurring there, and instantly he rushed within, determined, whatever the peril might be, to go to the help of the war woman, for somehow he believed that she was to be found in the thickest of the contest.

His entrance, at first unnoticed in the confusion, was speedily discovered, and before any opportunity for explanation could be given, one of the men, seizing the young soldier by the arm, shouted : —

“Here, Pete ! Here’s another of the black-hearted tories !”

“Hi there ! Don’t shoot ! Don’t you dare lift a finger against that man ! He’s a friend ! Don’t you all dare touch him !” screamed Nancy.

The smoke by this time had partly cleared, the heated air carrying it out through the open door, and the young soldier was able to discern the people before him. On the floor lay the motionless bodies of two of the war woman’s recent guests. The third, the leader, was now helpless in the grasp of two men who had seized him. He was being held against

the wall and was pitifully begging for mercy at the hands of his captors.

The call of Nancy had served to gain a measure of attention, and a huge bearded man, who the soldier at once concluded must be Pete, Nancy's husband, turned sharply and said: —

"Who is this fellow? What is he doing here?"

"He's a friend of Light Horse Harry," explained the woman.

"What is he doing here?" repeated the man.

"He'll tell you. I don't know. But don't one of you all dare touch him!"

"We'll attend to his case later," said the man abruptly, as he turned once more to the captive. "Now what have you to say for yourself?" he demanded of him savagely.

"Nothin'! Nothin'!" the prisoner whimpered. "I was just lookin' for Sam Bliven. I'd heard he'd been here —"

"He's here now," broke in the man. "Step up here, Sam," he called to a young fellow not more than seventeen or eighteen years of age. "Jonathan Whitney's a-lookin' fo' you all. Now then, speak up, Jonathan, an' tell Sam what yo' was a-wantin' 'long o' him."

"I don't want nothin' now. Let me go, Pete! Let me go!"

"I thought yo' said yo' was a-lookin' fo' Sam."

"I was! I did! I don't want anything. Let me go, Pete! Oh, let me go!"

"Seems a bit strange yo' all should 'a' been so right down anxious fo' t' get a sight o' Sam an' then when yo' do see him th' sight seems toe set yo' all a-goin'. Anything in p'tic'lar yo' all wanted o' Sam?"

"No! No! I don't want Sam. I'll give yo' my word o' honor never toe look fo' Sam again. Never, nowhere, so help me —"

"Might 's well go on with your work, boys," said Pete to his fellows calmly.

Despite the screams and pleadings of the wretched victim his hands were seized and bound securely behind his back. His feet were also tightly bound together, and then three of the men, lifting him in their arms, bore him quickly out of the house into the darkness of the night.

"What are you going to do with the fellow?" inquired the young soldier of Pete, who had not joined his companions in their task.

"You'll find an answer to your question if

yo' all will take a peep at the pine tree to-morrow mornin'—the tree in front o' th' house."

"Are you going to hang him?" cried the young soldier, horror-stricken at the threat implied in the man's words.

"That's what's going toe be did, suh," replied Pete quietly.

"But you have no right! That is beyond all reason! It's horrible! It's wicked! You must n't —"

"It's about time fo' yo' all toe quit your preachin' an' give an account o' yourself. Who are you? What yo' all doin' here?"

Pete's voice was low, but the young soldier was aware as he listened that the question was not one to be evaded or even lightly answered.

CHAPTER XI

A ROOT OF BITTERNESS

"I'M on the same side you are," the stranger replied quietly.

"Prove it," responded Pete gruffly.

Drawing his letter from his pocket, the young soldier held it before the man so that the address, "Gen'l Nath'l Greene," could be seen in the dim light.

"That does n't do me any good," said Pete without offering to take the letter.

"Why not? Does n't General Nathanael Greene mean anything?"

"Is that what it says?"

"Why, yes," said the young soldier quickly.

"You can see for yourself," he added, as he once more held out the letter.

"I can't read those crow-tracks."

"Oh," said the stranger, at once aware that Nancy's husband was unable to read, "I shan't open the letter or let you have it, but a message to General Greene ought to be a passport in this part of the country. Isn't there some man here who can read?"

"Not one."

"Well, I don't know what else I can do. I've shown you that I am the bearer of a letter to the commander of the army in the South. That ought to vouch for the fact that at least I am not fighting against him."

"Who gave you that letter?"

"General Washington."

A change in Pete's manner instantly became manifest, although apparently he was still determined to be on his guard against the stranger. "Did he give it to you himself?"

"He did. I had one for Light Horse Harry too."

"Where is it?"

"I gave it to the colonel as I was ordered."

"Where is Light Horse Harry now?"

"He is n't very far away, though I wish I knew just where he is. His legion was divided into two parts when he left Monmouth Court House—the foot-soldiers to go to the head of the Chesapeake and embark there, while the mounted men were to come south by land."

"How many are in the legion?"

"Two hundred and eighty. It has been enlarged, you know. General Washington made a levy of picked men and filled it up to help

General Greene and Sumter and Marion in the South. You'll hear of Light Horse Harry's legion before you are much older."

"Do you belong to it?"

"No."

"What are you doing here then?"

"I told you. I've come ahead of the legion to bring word to General Greene. Perhaps you can tell me where he is."

"I reckon I might give a right smart guess," said Pete dryly. "If I was sure yo' are what yo' claim toe be —"

"You all have talked enough, Pete," broke in Nancy sharply. "The man is all right an' I know it."

"Yo' know a right smart lot o' things, Nance," responded her husband, a grim smile appearing for a moment on his rough and bearded face. "Some o' 'em is so sure enough, and some is n't."

"I'm tellin' you, Pete, he's all right," declared Nancy tartly.

"I reck'n he is, Nance."

"Then quit your foolishness and 'tend to these fellows," said Nancy, as she glanced at the bodies of the men on the floor.

"While you're doing that," spoke up the stranger, "I'll take a look at my horse."

"Horse? You all got a horse?" asked Pete.

"Yes, sir. How did you think I came here?"

"Where is it?"

"I tied him to a tree a hundred feet or so back on the path."

"Go get him."

The young soldier quickly departed, and though rain was falling and the night was dark, he had slight difficulty in regaining his faithful animal which he released and led by the bridle back to Nancy's humble abode.

As he passed through the yard, he could see the twisting figure of a man hanging by a rope from the branch of a huge tree. The sight was not one to soothe the feelings of the young soldier, even though he recalled the directions he had heard Pete give his followers concerning the disposal of the invader of his home. Without pausing, however, the young messenger led his horse to the front of the house where the blaze from the roaring fire of logs on the hearth enabled him to see within. He was aware at the first glance that the bodies of the two men who had been shot had been removed, though he could only conjecture as to the disposal of them. His own

heart was heavy, for though he had become familiar with some of the tragedies that are a part of war, anything as brutal as the treatment of the men discovered in Nancy's home had seldom been reported.

"Hold on," called Pete. "We'll put your horse in the barn. We haven't anything to feed him, but we can shelter him from the storm, anyway."

Seizing a huge pine knot, Pete waited a moment until it had caught fire as he held it in the blaze, then, turning, he called again, and with his glowing torch led the way to the low barn, if so rude a structure as the shelter of logs and poles could be dignified by that term.

Here the horse was stabled, while from the scanty store of provender which the young soldier wisely carried with him the wearied animal was fed after he first had been rubbed down by his owner. Throughout the task Pete did not offer to aid, nor did he express his feeling of disgust for such painstaking care of a mere animal,—a feeling of which the visitor was aware as he glanced occasionally at his silent companion.

In a brief time the two men returned to the house; but when the stranger entered he was

at once aware that Pete's recent companions were gone.

"I c'n give you all a bite o' hoecake," suggested Nancy. "That's 'bout all the place can scare up, I reck'n."

"Don't 'pologize, Nance," said her husband solemnly. "If this man is what he's a-claimin' fo' t' be, he'll know what's become o' th' turkeys an' things."

"I'll be thankful to get some hoecake," spoke up the visitor. "Indeed, I do know where the other things have gone. I can never forget what I have seen here to-night. It was horrible — worse than anything I ever heard or dreamed of."

"A man must protect his own family," said Pete solemnly.

"That's true. But protecting your wife—"

"I reck'n I don't need very much protectin'," spoke up Nancy, who was busied in her preparation of the meal. "I'm thinking there's as many hereabout what know me as the 'war woman' as call me by th' name o' Nance."

As the young soldier gazed at the woman and again noted her great size, the manifest strength which she possessed, the flashing glances from her twisted eyes, and even the

warlike tinge of her hair, he was prepared to accept all that she claimed for herself.

"Protecting a man's wife," he said to Pete, "and shooting neighbors and even hanging some of them to a tree in front of your house are not quite the same thing."

"Yes, they be," retorted Pete solemnly.

"I don't see how."

"That's because yo' all are a stranger in these yere pa'ts."

"If that is what you're doing, then I'm not sorry I am."

"Yo' all don't know what yo're a-talkin' 'bout!" broke in Nancy, her eyes flashing in a manner not altogether soothing to the feelings of her guest. "Pete yere an' some o' our neighbors had a hand in the doin's in Georgia and hereabouts too. Tell him 'bout it, Pete," she added.

"The' 's mighty little fo' to tell, Nance," responded her husband.

"Tell him," she ordered.

"Well, yo' all know, I reck'n," began Pete, "that Georgia was the first o' the colonies which the redcoats really got completely in their hands. I was there a-fightin' an' I reck'n I know what I'm talkin' 'bout. Yo' all never in all your bo'n days heard anything like th'

way th' whigs was treated when th' tories found out that they really had got th' upper hand. Our soldiers were just driven out o' Georgia, an' then th' tories cut loose. They jest seemed t' glory in th' worst things they could find fo' t' do. Peaceable men were hanged just because they was 'spected o' sidin' with th' colonies. Many's th' house I've seen set on fire and the people that lived there shot down like rats when they tried fo' t' git out o' th' blazin' buildin'. I've seen little boys an' girls strung up by their thumbs till they told where their fathers were. I've seen old women, all bent up with the rheumatism, taken out doors and made fo' t' dance on red-hot coals. I've known o' men who dared fo' t' go back home to look after their families bein' shot by men who was lyin' in wait, — just shot down by some tory who was peekin' through th' window. Yo' all up North think yo' know a little 'bout the sufferin', but what yo' all know is n't a flea bite compared with what's been a-goin' on down yere."

"Do you say the redcoats have done these things?"

"No. Not so much th' redcoats — though they don't go fo' t' be more careful in their treatment o' th' people than is necessary. It's

mos'ly the tories. I've known o' fathers shootin' down their own boys jest because the boys stood up fo' Washington and the fathers was all for King George. I could tell you of brothers followin' their own brothers to their death. It's mos'ly like what our preacher tells about — 'a man's foes shall be they of his own household.' "

"Horrible!"

"You all don't begin t' know th' whole story. It's come to pass that every man and boy what can carry a gun has got toe have a part in this fight. It's against the redcoats or against your neighbors. There's no work on the plantations, no peace in the country, and no man is safe. It's a case of which can act first, that's all. These men what came here t'night were old friends of ours. But they're tories, or leastwise they were, an' if they'd got th' first chance toe draw a bead on me, I should n't be here tellin' yo' all 'bout it, an' that's all there is toe it."

"I did n't realize."

"In course," said Pete simply. "Nobody does 'ceptin' he's right yere in th' thick o' it. It's worse 'n a battle ever thought o' bein'."

"Pete can tell you all 'bout the battles, too," suggested Nancy.

"I was in some o' th' fights," acknowledged Pete; "Charleston fo' instance. Clinton, as you all know, left Newport and got all his men together, an' then, leavin' only a small force in New York, he brought all th' others down here an' set siege to Charleston. Lincoln made a good fight fo' toe hold the place, but he was beat. When th' redcoats got through in Georgia, they jest come up toe Charleston and joined the men there an' 't was n't long before the redcoats' fleet jest forced its way through the harbor, and all Lincoln could do was toe surrender. I'm not blamin' him, though if some o' us had had th' say we'd 'a' stuck it out as long as there was a man or a gun left."

"Clinton would n't allow the garrison to surrender unless it agreed to go through the public ceremony of laying down its arms, I have heard."

"Yo' all have heard correct," said Pete. "But that was n't the worst."

"What else did he do?"

"He sent out that brother o' Beelzebub, Tarleton, with his force o' cavalry an' they jest raided South Carolina till th' whole colony was jest a mass o' sufferin' and bruises. If the devil ever wants toe resign," continued Pete,

"I know who 's th' best one in creation fo' toe take his place."

"Who? Tarleton?"

"Correct, stranger. While th' siege o' Charleston was goin' on Tarleton brought his cavalry out toe Monk's Corner, thirty miles away, an' jest butchered a camp o' our men he surprised there."

"But that was fair, was n't it? It was war, and even Tarleton —"

"Yo' all would n't 'a' thought so if you had been there. 'T was n't war, 't was n't even fightin', 't was just butcherin'. We shan't forget Tarleton very soon fo' what he did at Monk's Corner. Then too up near th' line o' No'th Carolina th' same man, Tarleton, did th' same thing toe a body o' our men at Waxhams."

"He really drove our men out of South Carolina just as had been done in Georgia?"

"Yes, I reck'n so. Leastwise that's what Clinton thought, for he went back toe New York pretty quick, feelin' sure he 'd got South Carolina all right. He even took a part o' his troops with him, an' left Cornwallis toe look after th' others what had been left behind. I reck'n Lord Cornwallis has his own ideas by this time whether South Carolina was very

much subdued. I'd like toe hear him express his opinion o' th' state o' th' case toe th' Swamp Fox, the Game Cock, an' some o' the others."

CHAPTER XII

AN ARRIVAL

"WE have heard of what Sumter and Marion have been doing," said the young soldier. "They have been making their headquarters in the swamps, have n't they? That's what you have been doing too, I suspect, from what I have seen and heard to-night."

"I don't reckon they've had much o' any 'headquarters,' as you all call 'em. They've been mos'ly where they was n't wanted an' where the redcoats did n't suspect 'em o' bein'. But they've managed toe keep South Carolina from goin' back too far. She's the livest corpse the redcoats have left in these yere pa'ts."

"I can believe that from what I have seen here. What was the trouble with General Gates? All sorts of stories have been going round up North. Do you know just why the command was taken away from him and General Greene was sent down here in his place?"

"I reck'n I do, stranger."

“What was it?”

“Gates is no fightin’ man. He’s a reg’lar little dandy. He could n’t get th’ men under him toe fight, either. Why, back yere at Camden, where th’ redcoats whipped daylight out o’ his men last August, he had n’t been givin’ his army anything to eat exceptin’ peaches fo’ three days. Peaches is all right, but not for fightin’. Th’ militia up an’ run at the first fire.”

“That was n’t due to peaches.”

“Mebbe not, but a man has got toe have somethin’ more’n over-ripe fruit if he’s goin’ toe stand his ground.”

“Did every one run?”

“Not by a jugfull! The Marylanders stood their ground, but not even DeKalb, the Dutchman, who was commandin’ ’em, could hold ’em in line when they was pretty much fightin’ alone. Even the Maryland continentals had toe give way at last.”

“Where did Gates go?”

“He kept ahead o’ his men all th’ way toe Hillsboro. He did n’t ’pear fo’ toe care what became o’ his army so long as he was able toe keep his pretty clothes from gettin’ muddy. I don’t know much about this yere Greene that the Congress is said toe have put in his place.”

"You will know more about him," said the young soldier confidently.

"What sort o' 'pearin' man is Greene? Have you all ever seen him?"

"Yes, I've seen him a good many times. He's a man under forty. He's tall and heavily built, though he's not so big a man as General Washington."

"Light-complexioned or dark?"

"Light. His face is red —"

"Then he'll fight good!" broke in Pete confidently.

"I know he will! General Washington considers him the best man he has under him."

"How do you all know that? Washington tell you so?"

"No," laughed the stranger, "but that's the common report and I guess it's true. They are great friends, I know. General Greene's oldest boy is named for the general. Nathanael Greene is a man you would like the first time you saw him. He is very quiet and does n't have much to say, but he makes every one that meets him his friend."

"That's good. That will count down yere. Gates did n't seem toe care a bean fo' his men. He was all took up with himself. I'm told the people up at Richmond made a great

time over him when he stopped there on his way north, but I reck'n it was just because they felt sorry fo' him. I was n't at the battle o' Camden so I can't tell you all anything except what I've heard. I had a gun at King's Mountain 'long in October."

"Did you?" said the stranger eagerly. "That must have been worth while."

"It was," replied Pete quietly. "Lord Cornwallis, after the battle o' Camden, sent Colonel Ferguson with 'leven hundred redcoats fo' toe 'rouse th' tories in No'th Carolina. I reck'n he was a bit surprised when he found more whigs than he did tories. The No'th Carolina folk always were a decent lot, you know; though I must say th' way some o' the Scotchmen sided with the redcoats was a surprise toe some o' us. Well, when old redcoat Ferguson found he did n't have so many friends as he thought, he all at once decided toe fortify himself at King's Mountain —"

"Where is that?"

"Why, I thought ev'rybody knew where King's Mountain is! It's between the Broad and th' Catawba. The men in the fight there was mostly from No'th Carolina and Tennessee, and they could shoot! An' they did! They gave it toe Ferguson that day."

"Why did n't that put a stop to the red-coats in the Carolinas?"

"Because just 'bout that time 'long comes this Tarleton, own brother toe Beelzebub, as I was tellin' you all, an' he almost caught Sumter an' his men in a trap at Fishing Creek. Tarleton is as quick as he is bad, I'll have toe give him credit fo' that. He surprised the Game Cock and sent his men in every direction. It looked right bad fo' a spell, but I'm tellin' yo' all that the Game Cock and the Swamp Fox don't know how toe give up. An' now that 's where we all are, an' what 's ahead o' us no man can tell till this new man, Greene, gives us a chance toe see what 's in him."

"He'll give you a chance and you'll find that he'll keep all of you busy from start to finish. Then, too, Light Horse Harry's legion will be something to reckon with."

"Only two hundred and eighty all told, you say?"

"That 's right. But you must not forget that you get the measure of some men by weighing them as you do of others by counting."

"I reck'n that 's so, stranger. Here comes Nance with some hoecake. Mebbe you can find a spare place fo' a bite o' it."

"I am sure I can," laughed the visitor lightly, as he took a cake from the trencher which Nancy extended.

For a time conversation in the little cabin was broken, or ceased altogether, while the two hungry men disposed of the viands which Nancy had provided. Both were hungry, and though the food was plain it had been prepared in a manner that plainly revealed that Nancy, though she might be known in the region as the war woman, was by that fact not to be deprived of her reputation as a cook.

When at last the hoecake had all disappeared, Pete rose from the rude bench on which he had been seated. Taking his rifle in his hand, he turned to his guest and said, "What next, stranger?"

"I don't just know. I'm plainly out of my way. I ought to get to General Greene's camp just as soon as I can make it. You don't want to take me there, do you?"

"I sho'ly don't."

"I am almost as tired as my horse," said the young soldier hesitatingly. "What I've seen here to-night has shown me that I must pick my way with care or I'll get into trouble. I might go back with you into the swamp and stay till morning. Can I take my horse there?"

"No, suh."

"I don't like to leave him."

"I should n't advise you toe leave him."

"What do you advise?"

"It all depends. When do you all want toe start?"

"I'd like to give my horse a few hours' rest."

"Nance, what do you say?" inquired Pete, glancing at his wife.

"I say fo' him toe stay right yere till he's a good an' ready toe leave. I'm not afraid, Pete. You all go back toe your men an' I'll stay yere an' look after the place."

"How does that strike you, stranger?" asked Pete of his guest.

"Anything will suit me. If it is likely to make any trouble for you or your wife to have me stay here, I'd rather leave at once. If you don't think it will, then I'll get a few hours of sleep, let my horse rest, and then I'll start on before it is light. If you could give me a few directions I'd be mighty glad to have them. I want to get into Greene's camp just as soon as possible, and I'm afraid, as I said, that I'm out of my way."

"I reck'n yo' are," said Pete dryly. "You stay right yere and Nance will fix you up. I've got to go back toe my men."

"How many men have you in the swamp?"

"Enough, though I want more," replied Pete curtly. "Good-by, stranger. It mought be I'll see you all again before you are expectin' me. You stay right here and leave when yo' please. Nance can take care o' herself an' you too if need be, but if yo' all want me, jest don't forget what three blows on a conch-shell have done to-night. Good-night."

The words were barely spoken before the huge man abruptly departed from the house and disappeared in the darkness outside. Obeying the directions of his hostess, the young soldier stretched himself on a blanket which Nancy spread upon the floor and in a brief time he was asleep.

The rain had ceased when he awoke, but he saw when he glanced through the open door that the night was still dark. The fire on the stone hearth had burned low, and the light in the room was dim. Sitting quickly erect, the messenger looked about him for his hostess, but he was not able to discover her in the room.

The sound of voices in low conversation outside the door startled him, and he was aware at once of what had awakened him. He had no difficulty in recognizing one voice

as that of Nancy, but the one who was talking to her was unknown to him. Certainly it was not the voice of Nancy's husband, he concluded, after listening intently for a moment, and then some of the conversation was distinctly heard by him and caused the young soldier instantly to become alert and attentive.

"To-night?" Nancy was saying, manifestly surprised by what she heard.

"Yes, Nancy, to-night," replied the stranger.

"Pete was n't expectin' that."

"No."

"Yo' all are certain sure?"

"I know it."

"Shall I call Pete?"

"Yes."

"Yo' all want all his men?"

"Yes."

"Yo' know where he is?"

"I know, but I don't want to go into the swamp."

"It's 'bout as far from th' swamp toe the cabin as it is from the cabin toe th' swamp," suggested Nancy.

"Will you call him or shall I?" demanded the man, ignoring the war woman's suggestion.

"I reck'n I c'n call him."

"Do it then."

"I 've got a man in th' house," suggested Nancy.

"A man?" inquired her companion, plainly startled. "Who is he?"

"That I can't tell you."

"Where did he come from?"

"Up North — leastwise that's what he says."

"Has Pete seen him?"

"He has."

"What does he think of him?"

"Pete's mighty suspicious."

"Does n't the fellow give any account of himself?"

"All he 'lows is that he wants right smart fo' toe get to Greene."

"Does he say what for?"

"He showed Pete a letter — but, lan'! that did n't do Pete a mite o' good. Might 's well showed him th' Declaration of Independence fo' all th' help it 'd 'a' been to Pete."

"What do you think of the fellow, Nancy?"

"I reck'n he's all right. He was willin' toe help me this evenin' when —"

"Yes, yes, I know," broke in the man quickly.

"I reck'n he won't harm anybody. He does n't 'pear toe be one what would be able toe do much damage."

"Has he a horse?"

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"In the barn."

"You say the fellow is from the North and that he wants to take a letter to General Greene? That is n't a very likely story, for he's miles out of his way, if that is what he came for."

"Come in an' take a look at him fo' yourself. He's sleepin'."

The conversation ceased, and in a moment Nancy and her companion entered the room. Their surprise was great when they beheld the man, who had been the subject of their conversation, standing in front of the fireplace and facing them.

CHAPTER XIII

A TRAP

For a moment no one spoke, while the two men gazed sharply at each other. Apparently satisfied by his inspection, the man said to the young soldier, "Nancy tells me you have a letter for General Greene."

"I have."

"Let me see it."

"You must first tell me who you are."

The man stared blankly at the quiet young stranger and then laughed as he said, "You're a cool one, young man. I reckon you are from the North, all right. Here I ask you a question and you turn around to answer it by asking me another. It matters a right smart more who you are than it does who I am. Let me see your letter."

"I'll let you see the directions," responded the young soldier quietly as he held forth the missive, though he retained a firm grasp upon it as he did so.

"The directions are sure enough right," said the man as he read the superscription. "You don't want me to read the letter?"

"That I cannot let you do."

"Let me? You don't know what you all are talking about."

The man was tall, angular, and manifestly muscular, but the younger man apparently was not alarmed.

"No one but General Greene has a right to the letter. I showed the directions to Pete because I knew what he is, and I wanted him to understand that I was on the same side with him."

"We'll have to take your word for it," said the man lightly. "I have n't time for any more explanations. If you are as anxious to find General Greene as you appear to be, we'll help you on your way. A stranger in these parts might get lost on his way to Cheraw Hill —"

"Is that where the general is now?" broke in the young soldier.

"You'll soon find that out and some other things too," said the man quietly. "Here comes Pete," he added, as Nancy's husband entered the house.

Apparently ignoring the presence of the young stranger, the two men at once entered into a low conversation and soon afterward Pete departed. The night was still intensely

dark, and no signs of approaching daylight could be seen. Nancy and her most recent visitor appeared to be intensely interested in some topic of conversation which the young soldier was not able to hear. He remained seated on the rude bench near the fireplace awaiting further events.

He had not waited long before he heard the sounds of men outside the house, and then Pete speedily entered and said briefly, "I reckon we 're all ready, captain."

"That 's good," said the man who had been talking to Nancy. "I knew you would n't keep me waiting long. I reckon we 'd better start."

"*He* going with us?" inquired Pete, as he spoke, glancing at the young soldier.

"He surely is."

"Where are you going?" demanded the young messenger quietly.

"I thought you wanted toe find General Greene," said the man whom Pete had addressed as "captain."

"I do."

"Then you 're toe go with us."

"I am, if you are going to Cheraw Hill."

"Any more like you where you came from?" laughed the captain, after he had

stared a moment at the quiet-spoken young stranger.

"Are you starting for Cheraw Hill, captain?" repeated the young soldier.

"Come along and you'll find out."

"I'm ready. Shall I get my horse now?"

"Joe," said the captain as he stepped to the door and spoke to some one outside the house, "you go with this young man and help him get his horse. It's in Pete's barn."

The young soldier did not protest, and accompanying the unknown man he speedily secured his horse and returned to the house. He could see that a dozen men, every one having a horse, were in the band. He at once concluded that they must be the patriots whom Pete had gathered at his hiding-place in the near-by swamp. As he looked keenly at the band whom he could see in the dim light, he was convinced that most of them were young, about his own age, although in the number were several whose long white beards indicated that the attempt to defend the region from the invading redcoats was not confined to any one class. They were a grim, determined body of men, and as he joined them, the curiosity with which he was manifestly greeted did not detract from the satisfaction the young

soldier felt that he was to be one of the number, for he was convinced now that the captain had stopped for Pete and his followers to go with him to Cheraw Hill. And this was to be the destination of his own journey if the word which the captain inadvertently dropped was correct.

In a brief time the captain appeared. At his word the band formed in order and the young soldier was bidden to ride beside the captain and Pete, who were to form the rear-guard of the little force. Nancy was standing in the doorway of her rude little home, an interested spectator of the scene. Apparently she was in no wise anxious concerning the safety of her husband. Indeed, her eagerness for him to go seemed to be her predominant feeling.

"Good-by, Nancy," said the young soldier. "Thank you for what you have done for me. You have been good to me. I wish I could repay you."

"Pay me!" retorted Nancy. "I don't know as I jest understand you all."

"Thank you, anyway," laughed her recent guest. "If you will come to Jersey some day, I'll try to do as much for you as you have done for me."

"I reck'n Jersey 's a right smart way from these yere pa'ts."

"I reckon it is, Nancy."

The word to start was given, and accordingly there were no further opportunities for conversation. There were no words of farewell between Pete and his warlike wife, which was a matter of surprise to the young soldier though he made no comment. He was elated, as he thought that his own journey was now drawing near to its close; and if he should meet with no further mishaps he soon would be able to deliver into the hands of General Greene the letter which had been given him by Washington.

The twisting awful figure of the man which was hanging from a near-by tree recalled the tragic experiences of the night.

Turning to Pete the young rider inquired, "Are n't you going to take that—that down?"

"Naw. Let his friends do that."

"But Nancy is all alone. They might harm her."

"I reck'n Nance c'n take keer o' herself."

"I reckon she can," admitted the young soldier, as he recalled the sight of her as she stood facing her visitors the preceding evening.

The first streaks of the coming day were now appearing, and in the dim light the muddy, rocky road over which the little band was moving, the dripping trees, and even the men themselves, appeared almost unreal. Seldom was a word spoken as the band advanced, but the spirit of determination which seemed to possess every one became more manifest as the hours passed. The men rode swiftly, two riding far in advance of their companions and the trio already mentioned forming the rear-guard. The face of the huge bewhiskered Pete was almost solemn in its expression, and that of the captain beside him was a study. Although apparently slight heed was given him, the young soldier was not for a moment unaware that his presence in the little force was a source of perplexity to the men. The slightest suspicious act on his part would at once bring upon him the wrath of the band. He was well content, however, both because of the protection the company afforded and the certainty that now he would not be likely to lose his way.

Near noontime the band halted to rest their horses and prepare a scanty meal. The men were silent for the most part, and there was almost nothing of the pranks or jokes which

the young soldier had found prevalent in the camps of the North. He was unable to shake off the conviction that the captain was fearful of pursuit or of some sudden attack, for both the carefulness with which he stationed his guards, whenever a halt was made, and the arrangement of his few men on their advance seemed to indicate his fear of this peril. As for the young soldier, slight attention was given him and as yet he had not even learned the name of the captain who was in command of the band.

In the middle of the afternoon the party arrived on the bank of a stream where a halt was again made. Here a consultation was held as to the best course to be followed. The rains had filled the creek, or "river," as the captain called the stream, so that the water came almost to the tops of the banks.

"There's another ford five miles up," suggested Pete.

"That won't be any better than this," replied the captain. "If we can't ford here, I reckon we can't do any better up yonder."

"The water is too deep here to ford."

"You're correct."

"You all sho'ly don't want toe turn back?"

"No, sir."

"Then we 'll have toe swim our horses."

"That 's the only way, Pete."

The captain's suggestion was instantly acted upon and the men began to divest themselves of their clothing. The waters before them were swift and cold and there would be difficulty for the men in urging their horses into the stream, as well as in managing them when once the wearied animals had entered. Not a man, however, hesitated. In a brief time, all attempts at an orderly crossing having been abandoned, the men forced their snorting steeds into the water. Almost every man was carrying his clothing in a bundle which, together with his gun, he was striving with one hand to hold above the river, while with the other he was endeavoring to guide his horse. The young soldier had taken special care to have his coat, which contained the letter with which he had been intrusted, on the top of the bundle he had made of his own clothes. He had safely gone as far as the middle of the stream, and thus far had been successful in his attempts to protect the missive which he had received from the hands of General Washington himself. At other times he would have been amused at the sight of the men

about him. Most of them were shivering with the cold. Some were having trouble with their frightened horses, while others were frantically endeavoring to rescue their clothing from the stream into which it had fallen.

"There goes my coat," shouted Joe, as he leaned forward. His horse, startled by the unexpected shout, made a sudden plunge, and the luckless rider was flung into the cold and muddy water.

"Get my hat, Joe," called one of his comrades banteringly. "It's coming right to you."

"Get your own belongings!" sputtered Joe, as he lifted his head.

"Look out! Look out. I'm joining you!" cried another, as he slid from the back of his horse.

The confusion was increasing every moment. Some of the men, unable to swim, were terrified as the alarm of their horses increased. The captain and Pete were doing their utmost to aid, but the young soldier was devoting his efforts to the protection of the precious missive in the pocket of his coat.

Suddenly the reports of guns rang out from the shore before the men. At the same time shouts and cries and the discharge of muskets on the bank from which the little force

had started were also heard. Instantly the confusion of the band was redoubled. One of the men had been struck by a bullet and two of the horses were wounded. Pete had grasped the wounded man by the shoulder and was doing his utmost to hold his head above water. To go ahead was to meet armed men equal in numbers to the struggling swimmers and far better prepared for a contest. To attempt to regain the shore from which they had started appeared to be equally impossible. The men on either bank were waving their guns and dancing about like madmen.

“We’ve got you now, Cap Johnston!” shouted one of the men on the shore in front of the swimmers. “Hold up your right hand and we’ll know you mean to surrender. We’ve got you!”

The young soldier glanced for a moment at the men before him. He could see several there clad in the scarlet uniform of the red-coats. Others were dressed in the garb of the farmers of the region, but a bit of red on their hats showed that they were tories who now were fighting openly for King George. A glance behind him revealed the presence of the men on the bank there. They too were clad like the others. The little band of pa-

triot's had been caught between the two forces. Doubtless they had been seen when they entered the stream and purposely had been unmolested until they should be in a position where defense seemed impossible. The trap had been well prepared, thought the young soldier, as he quickly looked to Captain Johnston for his response to the demands of his enemies.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CAMP IN THE WOODS

THE leader of the desperate little band failed to respond to the call of the Tories, and speedily the confusion became still more marked. The men on the banks of the stream were reloading their guns, while the patriots — whether acting upon the word of Captain Johnston or moved by a common impulse, the young soldier was unable to determine — together turned back to the bank from which they had started. As for the young soldier himself, he was now too far down the stream to permit him even to attempt to rejoin his recent companions. Thus far he had succeeded in holding the bundle of his clothing above the water. The bridle of his horse was still grasped in one hand while with the other the swimmer was able to guide his mount. His sole hope now rested upon his ability to go down the stream without drawing to himself the attention of the attacking party, most of whom plainly were excitedly watching the men who had remained with Captain Johnston.

In a brief time, however, the young soldier was aware that he was not to escape the attention of the Tories. Four of the band had now discovered his efforts to escape, and were running swiftly down the shore from which he had come. They called loudly to him as they advanced, but not a word in response did he utter. His efforts to escape were redoubled and he was frantically urging his horse to swim still faster.

“Stop! Come ashore!” again shouted one of the men on the bank.

Still no heed was given the demand, while the efforts of horse and swimmer to increase their speed were once more redoubled.

“Come ashore or we’ll shoot!” roared the man on the bank. “We’ll give you this chance! It’s your last! Do what we tell you or we’ll fill you full of lead!”

The swimmer slipped back beside his horse to secure such protection as the body of the struggling animal might afford. He spoke in low tones, urging his steed to still greater efforts, although he was convinced that the possibility of escape was almost gone. He was not yet ready however to abandon all attempts and still clung to the bridle.

Sharply the reports of four guns rang out,

and instantly the young soldier perceived that his horse had been hit in the head although he himself had escaped all harm. The wounded animal, with a cry that was almost human in its agony, partly raised himself in the water, struck out with his forefeet for a moment, and then became motionless as he began to drift down the stream.

Aware that his sole means of escaping was gone, the young soldier without hesitating a moment shouted to his enemies, "I'm coming!" and then began to swim toward the bank where the tories were awaiting his approach. The shore was only a few yards distant, and the young soldier was keenly watching the men before him. A shout had greeted his announcement, and he could see that all four men together had run to the bank of the stream and were excitedly watching him as he drew near. In a brief time the prisoner, for such he believed himself to be, gained the shallow water and began to wade toward his captors. A glance behind him revealed his horse floating down the stream. Plainly the stricken animal was dead and no further help was to be received from him. Quietly the dripping young man, still holding his bundle of clothing above his head, stepped to

the bank and calmly faced the four men in front of him.

"You did well!" shouted one of the band as he stepped forward and roughly grasped the prisoner by his arm. "A moment more and we'd have sent you after your horse."

"Who are you?" asked the young prisoner quietly.

"That's a good one!" responded his captor brutally. "You come along with us and we'll soon show you, though I reckon you all are not so blind as you'd have us believe."

"Are you some of Tarleton's men?"

"We all are our own men. Come! Come along with us!"

"I'm cold. Let me put on my clothes first," pleaded the prisoner, as he gazed calmly about him. In spite of his calm manner, however, he was really striving to measure the strength of his captors. He was convinced that in the excitement their guns had not been reloaded after the volley had been fired which killed his horse; but the muskets themselves were weapons not lightly to be despised.

"Never mind your clothes! you all will have plenty o' time to perk up after we've turned you over to the serjeant. Come on!"

"Where you going to take me?"

“Where you all belong.”

“Not just yet !” exclaimed the prisoner abruptly, as he quickly seized the speaker and lifting him in his arms flung him bodily upon the ground. Before the others could recover from the suddenness of the onslaught, the young soldier had seized and thrown another of the band. As the two remaining Tories leaped toward him, he seized one in his powerful grasp just as the other leaped upon his back and almost succeeded in bearing him to the ground. The man in front too was no weakling, and was struggling desperately. Up and down and back and forth the struggling trio swayed. To dispose of either of his contestants alone would have been comparatively easy for the prisoner, but the man on his back prevented him from using his arms freely, while the heavy weight of his body made the struggle uneven. How the contest might have ended if only the three men had been left to themselves cannot be known, but suddenly one of the men who had been thrown leaped to his feet, apparently recovered from the violence of his fall. Rushing to the assistance of his comrades, his added help soon put an end to the contest and the prisoner was helpless in their hands.

"Tie him up," panted one of the men when the young soldier became quiet.

"That won't do any good. You've got me now and I'll go with you," said the young prisoner in a matter-of-fact way.

"You all hold him tight till I load up," joined in the first of the four men, who also had recovered a part of his strength. "There won't be any need o' tying him then. I did n't believe you could do that what you did," he said to the prisoner, apparently in no wise angered by his recent experience.

"Let me dress myself," begged the prisoner, without responding to the suggestion.

"Time enough toe dress yo'self when you all get back," said one of the men gruffly. "The first thing fo' us toe do is toe get this fellow where he can't try his tricks again."

"Come on then," said the man who before had spoken.

The prisoner was placed in the centre of the little band, two of the men holding him firmly by the arms, while the other two, their muskets reloaded now, maintained a careful watch over their enemy for whom every one now had a feeling of deep respect. Such strength, even in a foe, was not to be looked upon lightly.

The prisoner was still permitted to retain his coat, although his other belongings were taken by his captors. Shivering with the cold, depressed by the outcome of his desperate attempt to break away from the men, the young soldier did not speak on the way back to the place where the other men of the band were assembled.

Upon their arrival they were hailed, and as the Tories glanced curiously at the powerful body of the young prisoner, one of them remarked to the captors, "Yo' all look like yo' had struck a first-class hurricane!"

"We did," responded one of the captors gruffly. "What you all reckon you 'll do with this man?"

"Send him on with the others. We're too near Cheraw Hill toe stop yere any longer. We got four o' th' men —"

"Did you get Pete?"

"We did."

"I reckon Pete 'll find out how hemp feels befo' mo'nin'."

"He sho'ly will."

"Where is he?"

"We've sent him an' Cap Johnston an' th' other two we got back toe th' camp."

"What became o' th' rest of th' band?"

"Got away."

"What did you let them do that fo'?"

"They was too spry. We may get 'em yet! Long Dick an' five men are a-chasin' 'em. They'll run 'em down right soon."

"That's as may be."

"Never yo' mind that! Long Dick will give an account o' himself. What yo' all are toe do now is toe take your man back toe camp."

The man's words were at once heeded and the prisoner was immediately ordered to go with the three armed men who were to conduct him to the camp of the tories. The young soldier made no protest except when he saw that his recent captors were not to be his conductors. Then he begged for his clothing. Night was at hand, and, chilled as he was by his experience in the river, the cold air increased his sufferings. His request, however, was ignored, though he was permitted to don his coat, to which he had clung all through his flight and capture. The tories were too excited to delay for such small matters as the comfort of a prisoner, and at once the four men departed. As he glanced about him the young soldier saw that more than a score of redcoats and tories were in the band that had attacked the followers of Captain Johnston. Every man

was armed, too, and the prospect of fair treatment did not appear promising. However, as the prisoner recalled the events that had occurred at Nancy's home and what had been the last sight he had seen when he departed from her place, he was not at a loss to conjecture what the treatment of himself, to say nothing of Pete and the energetic captain, was likely to be.

The men moved silently along the rough road that led through the woods. The fact that they were walking led the prisoner to suspect that the place they were seeking could not be far distant. Nor was he mistaken. Less than a half hour had elapsed when he saw before him in the woods a camp to which he was quickly conducted. At least forty men were assembled there. A few tents were nearby, and beyond them was an open space where a large number of horses were tethered.

As the young soldier looked about him, he was unable to find any indications of the fate that threatened him or even of the presence of any of his recent companions. Fearful that Pete and the captain might already have been dealt with, his alarm for his own safety increased. He watched the countenances of the men, who greeted his arrival with a loud shout,

but he was not able to learn their intentions by anything that was said or done.

After a brief conference between an officer and one of the men who had brought the prisoner to the camp, he was gruffly bidden to enter one of the tents. He had not even requested any protection from the cold ; indeed he had not once spoken since his arrival. He had noticed that the tent was guarded by an armed man, who was walking back and forth before the entrance, and he also saw that the tent was on the side of the camp near the horses, but neither fact impressed him deeply. His own condition was too critical to permit of other matters receiving much consideration. The fear lest he should be speedily dealt with was also strong, and as soon as he was left to himself he at once began eagerly to look about him.

Convinced that whatever action he should attempt must be speedily tried, and believing that a few minutes' grace would be granted while his fate was being determined, he decided to act immediately. The side of the tent opposite the entrance was held to the ground by ropes and stakes. A long hard pull upon these at once provided a means of exit. Without hesitating a moment he crawled forth and

crouched upon the ground. Not far away huge fires of logs were blazing, about which he could see many of the men. They were all talking or laughing loudly, manifestly well pleased with the outcome of the trap set for Captain Johnston and his band.

The sentinel advanced so that he could be seen by the crouching prisoner. For an instant the young soldier believed that he had been discovered. He drew back on the ground close to the tent and breathlessly awaited the man's next movement. In a brief time the sentinel retired on his beat beyond the open place, and instantly the young soldier arose and ran swiftly to the shelter of the nearest of the great trees that surrounded the camp. Having gained the place he was seeking, he peered cautiously at the guard who had once more advanced beyond the line of the tent.

CHAPTER XV

A STERN CHASE

TREMBLINGLY the young soldier watched the guard, who appeared to be without any suspicion that his prisoner had so speedily escaped from the tent in which he had been confined. Slowly the man walked the entire length of his beat and then turned about and soon was hidden from the sight of the prisoner. Instantly the latter darted from behind the tree which concealed him and ran swiftly to the friendly shelter of another huge tree, twenty feet nearer the place where the horses were tethered. There he stopped again and peered from his hiding-place at the guard who once more could be plainly seen.

Three times the young soldier repeated his flight from tree to tree. Every time he drew nearer the place he was seeking, and not once were the suspicions of the sentinel aroused. From beyond him came the noisy shouts and laughter of the men in the camp. The successful attack on the force which Captain Johnston led, apparently had raised the hopes of

every tory in the band. The words of a song rose above the shouts, and, listening a moment, the desperate young soldier fled still more swiftly toward the tethered horses. He believed that now the guard was unable to see him, and consequently his movements were less likely to be discovered. The moon had emerged from behind the clouds that had hidden it and in its light the horses were plainly seen. The night air was chilling, and the young soldier was shivering so that his hands were trembling like those of some aged person. He realized, however, the necessity of haste, and accordingly pushed quickly forward. Any moment his escape from the tent might be discovered, and in that event his own safety would be threatened. In his eagerness the young soldier crept to the border of the corral and stood erect for a moment as he gazed at the horses before him. Not a halter or bridle could he see in the vicinity. The horses were hobbled or tethered, and were crowding closely together for the sake of warmth.

Suddenly a whinny was heard, apparently coming from the woods beyond the place where the horses were standing. Instantly the young soldier dropped on the ground, and,

hardly drawing a long breath, listened for the approach of the man who, he suspected, might be coming to the camp of the tories. One of the horses near him neighed in response to the call and again the whinny in the distance was heard. When several minutes had elapsed and neither of the sounds was repeated nor did any indications appear that any rider was drawing near, the young soldier again rose and, still striving to move quickly, ran swiftly in the direction from which the startling whinny had come. The thought had occurred to him that still other horses had been tethered at a greater distance from the camp. In that event, his own chances of escaping would be greatly improved, he thought, if he could succeed in obtaining a horse from the corral which was farther from the tories.

Encouraged by the thought, the young soldier sped through the forest, the moonlight enabling him to find his way. His elation was great when, after he had gone a hundred and fifty feet, he saw another open space in which twenty or more horses had been left.

His supreme problem now was to find out whether or not the horses were guarded. Cautiously and slowly he circled the place, and his hopes were high when he was unable

to discover any man in the vicinity. Apparently the tories had not been fearful of an attack and accordingly had left their horses in a secluded place without any one being placed on guard. Elated by his discovery, the young soldier swiftly approached five of the horses which were standing apart from the drove. His coming was a matter of interest to the intelligent animals, all of which lifted their heads and stood gazing curiously at the approaching stranger. The light was sufficiently clear to enable the young soldier hastily to inspect the horses, and in a moment he made his choice. A young horse, apparently not much more than a colt, was selected and freed from its tether. Patting the horse for a moment, the young soldier then grasped it by the mane while he flung his other arm about its neck. Whispering encouragingly to the animal, he began to lead it slowly apart from its fellows. Without hesitation the horse followed, stepping softly on the damp earth and occasionally sniffing at the sleeve of the coat which now was the sole protecting garment of the escaping prisoner.

“Look yonder! One of the colts has broken loose!”

Startled by the unexpected call, the young

soldier glanced fearfully behind him and beheld two men standing near the corral. One of them was pointing to the horse which was being led away, but apparently neither man had seen or even suspected that some one was leading the colt. The body of the horse intervened between the prisoner and the tories.

"It's your pony, Lish!" suggested the second man noisily. "Call her back. She'll come to your call."

Acting upon the suggestion, the owner of the colt, as he started swiftly in pursuit, called, "Here, Lady! Come back here, Lady!"

Realizing that the decisive moment had arrived, the young soldier leaped suddenly upon the back of the animal beside him, and, leaning low, flung both his arms about her neck as he shouted in her ears, "Go! go!"

"Hi, there, you horse thief!" shouted the astonished tory as he beheld the sight before him. "Bring back that horse! Bring it back or I'll shoot you like a rabbit!"

Disregarding the order, the young rider drummed with his heels upon the sides of the horse he was riding, as he urged her to greater speed. The startled animal leaped forward,

while for a moment her rider almost seemed to lose control. He had no bridle nor any means by which he could guide the terrified colt. His supreme desire was to get beyond the sight of the men behind him. His knowledge of the region was exceedingly slight, and even the location of the road was unknown. The instinct of the intelligent animal he was riding and the chance that an open road might be somewhere near were his chief reliances now. Again and again he urged the fleet animal to increased speed, and with every appeal the horse bounded forward. Leaping over the fallen logs, bounding from mound to mound, the colt steadily sped onward. The young rider at times was almost swept from his seat by the low hanging branches of the trees beneath which his way led. The bushes scratched his unprotected feet and legs, and he could do little to shield himself, his entire attention being demanded by his efforts to retain his seat. All idea of time was lost, and he could not have told whether it had been moments or hours since he had mounted the horse and fled from the camp.

A low exclamation escaped the lips of the startled rider when suddenly he beheld a road in front of him. What it was and where

it led were both unknown, but the relief at his sight of it was so great that he was almost ready to shout, believing, as he did, that escape was now possible.

His exultation was brief, however, for even before he gained the road he heard behind him the sounds of his pursuers. Doubtless they too were mounted, he thought, and familiar with the road. In spite of his ignorance, the young rider was glad when his horse turned to the left and sped down the road as if she was seeking some well-known place. The colt even now was breathing heavily from her exertions, and the alarm of the young soldier was correspondingly increased. A glance behind him revealed the presence of his pursuers just emerging from the woods. There were two men, both mounted, and without doubt both were armed. Whether or not they had aroused the camp and a general pursuit would follow, the young soldier could only conjecture, but his fears increased. Again and again he spoke to the running horse. Even at the peril of her failing him at the crucial moment, he was determined, first of all, to place the greatest possible distance between himself and the two Tories who were pursuing him.

It became evident after a few moments had passed that he was slightly gaining. The dark trees by the roadside seemed almost to fly past him. The moon now disappeared, hidden behind the low scudding clouds. Even in the dim light, however, the forms of the two mounted men could be seen. Plainly they were holding steadily to the chase, although it was evident that they were losing slightly in the mad race. They no longer called for the fugitive to stop. There were no threats now to use their pistols. It was a stern chase, though the young rider, from the labored breathing of his colt, was confident that it would not be a long one. What he did he must do quickly, he decided, as again he redoubled his efforts to increase the speed of the horse he was riding.

He was aware now that he was at the foot of what appeared to be a steep and long hillside. His wearied horse must slacken her pace or find a moment's rest. His pursuers were hidden from sight by the bend in the road behind him, but the young rider was positive that the pursuit was not abandoned. Perhaps the men were aware that his horse was too young to endure the strain of a prolonged flight. It might be, he thought, that they had

both depended upon this very hill to bring an end to their pursuit. The breathing of his horse even now was difficult and painful. It was a question whether or not she could gain the summit of the hill if the pace at which she was running was maintained.

The sight of an opening among the trees beside him instantly caused the young soldier to turn his horse's head away from the road. Leaping to the ground, he led the trembling, heaving animal within the shelter of the trees. He had no means of tying her, but trusting to her own condition to prevent her for a time from fleeing, he left her and sped back to the border of the woods, there to await the coming of his pursuers.

In his excitement now he was unmindful of the cold and even of the fact that his feet were scratched and bleeding. In a brief time he beheld the two men approaching, their horses running so easily that he was convinced that he had done wisely in stopping as he had near the base of the hill.

"I'm tellin' you he might 'a' slipped in yere," the young soldier heard one of the men say to his companion.

"Right yo' are," responded the other, as both men sharply halted their horses.

"I'll get down an' take a look at the ground. Maybe I can see some tracks."

Quickly one of the men dismounted and the young soldier, only a few yards away, watched him as he peered about for traces of the direction which the fugitive had taken.

"There's hoof-prints here sure enough," said the man who was searching. "I can't just tell whether they're fresh or not."

"You all go into the woods and follow the path," suggested his companion. "I'll go on toe th' top of the hill. That colt will be winded befo' long, anyway. If you don't find th' horse then you come on after me. I'm not afraid o' th' fellow gettin' away, though I'd give my boots toe know who he is an' how he did it."

"Go along. I'll take a look in yere," said the man on the ground. "I'll ride in a little way an' if I don't find the fellow right soon, I'll join you up the hill."

Instantly one of the men resumed his way up the hillside as his companion mounted his horse and followed the path into the woods. Waiting only until both had disappeared, the young soldier ran swiftly into the road and without hesitating an instant started back over the way he had come. The agreement

of the tories that they would meet at the top of the hill had led him to conclude that safety lay in the opposite direction, in spite of the fact that he must pass near the place where the tory camp was located.

The moon again was visible, and in its light the fleeing young soldier found slight difficulty in making his way over the rough road. He had not gone far, however, when he suddenly stopped as he beheld a low house of logs not far back in a little clearing. The sight of the house instantly caused him to change his plan, and without checking his speed he darted into the lane which led to the house in the distance.

When he came near the place he was seeking he was not able to discover any one awake. He was not even positive that the house was occupied, but quickly concluding that it would be unsafe to make any investigations at the time, he darted around the corner of the building. Not far behind the house was a small barn or shed. The sight of the building instantly caused the young soldier to flee to its shelter. Within, he found a cow lying on the floor, and the sight was convincing proof that the house itself was not unoccupied. A small pile of leaves and hay was in one corner

on the floor, and quickly covering himself with them as he sought the protection of the pile, in spite of his anxiety the young soldier was soon asleep.

It was daylight when he awoke, and in the clear light he beheld some one standing in the open door of the barn.

CHAPTER XVI

FRIENDS IN NEED

THE person that had halted in the open doorway turned to enter the barn and the young soldier saw that it was a woman before him. He himself could not be seen because even his face was concealed by the hay and the leaves beneath which he had found protection from the chill of the night. The woman again stopped and now the hidden soldier could see her still more distinctly. Apparently she was at least fifty years of age. Her face was expressionless, and even when it was turned to the pile of hay there was no interest in it. The dress she wore was ragged and torn, her hair was gray, and indications of sorrow and suffering, even of hopelessness and despair, were manifest in her listless manner as well as in her pinched and drawn face.

The startled young soldier at first was inclined to watch her without betraying his presence in the barn. He had no means of knowing whether or not she was the only occupant of the near-by house. If men were also there

he certainly had no desire to meet them. The camp of the tories was too near for him to be off his guard, so long as he remained in the vicinity, and a word from this woman might bring upon him the swarming band which already had secured Pete and Captain Johnston.

When the woman, however, advanced to the pile beneath which he was concealed, and prepared to grasp in her arms some of the hay, which she doubtless intended to throw over the partition which kept the cow in one part of the little room, he was aware that his presence would at once be revealed. Instantly deciding to prevent what would certainly occur, if she did what he expected her to do, he lifted his head above the hay and in a low voice said, "Good-morning to you."

The woman slowly turned and gazed apparently without fear or interest at the face of the man who had hailed her. She did not speak and the young soldier could not see that she was alarmed. "Good-morning," he repeated, intently watching the woman as he spoke. Still no reply was made nor did she move as she gazed at the face in the pile before her.

Puzzled by the strange behavior of the woman, the young soldier became a little

bolder. "Are there any men in the house or about the place?" he inquired.

A shake of her head was her sole response to the question.

Relieved by the apparent assurance that he was in no immediate peril, he again asked, "Have the tories moved their camp?"

Once more the woman shook her head, but did not speak.

Her apparent reply was in accord with what he had expected, and now he felt assured that the camp from which he had escaped was still in the adjacent woods. "Have any of the tories been here?" he eagerly asked.

Another shake of her head was the sole reply.

"That's good. You are not a tory, are you?"

A mechanical shaking of her head quickly strengthened the hope of her questioner.

"I did n't believe you were," he said eagerly. "I wonder if you couldn't help me. I'm in need of clothing. All I have is this coat. You have n't any objection to helping a good friend of the cause, have you?"

The monotonous motion of the head assured him she had none.

"Are you afraid of me?"

He was convinced that she was in no way

alarmed though still she did not speak, while her head moved almost as if it was a mechanical device and not a part of a human body.

"You need n't be alarmed," he added eagerly. "I knew you could n't be on the side of the rascally Tories. If you can give me a little breakfast and some clothes—I don't much care what—I'll thank you and leave your place right away. Do you know where Cheraw Hill is?"

Silently he was informed that the woman did not possess the desired knowledge.

"Oh, I'll find it," he said hastily. "Just let me have a little breakfast and I'll be all right. I wish you would give me something to wear. I was in the band that was crossing the creek yesterday afternoon when the Tories and redcoats attacked us. We lost most of our clothes. Did you hear about it?"

Still the only reply of the woman was a shaking of her head.

"I didn't think you would know anything about it," said the young soldier quickly. "Tell me, can you help me?"

The woman's head moved as if it was on a pivot, but still she did not speak.

"I'm sorry. Can you give me something to eat? Anything will do."

This time the woman stared silently and there was not even the usual response. Suddenly the young soldier looked at her with renewed interest. Was the woman unable to speak? The question had abruptly occurred to him and instantly he said aloud, "Can't you talk?"

A stare was his sole response.

"Are you deaf and dumb?" That the query was ridiculous at once occurred to him and the young soldier laughed. When he was a boy he had learned to "talk with his fingers," as he expressed the sign language of the mutes. Thrusting his arms outside his covering he quickly began to use his fingers as he spelled his first question. The expression of the woman's face instantly changed. She was eager and alert now and advanced nearer the hay, while she at once began to manipulate her own fingers. Here was a language in which he might be able to make known his wants, the young man thought, and a new conversation by its means at once followed.

"Are you a friend of the colonies?" he inquired.

"Yes! Yes!" was the woman's reply, accompanied by many decided nods as she swiftly moved her fingers.

“Is the camp of the tories still below us in the woods?”

“Yes.”

“Are you alone?”

“Yes. My father was shot and my brother is with Sumter.”

“Can you let me have some of his clothes?”

“Why?” The expression of perplexity on the woman’s face at another time might have been amusing, but now the eager boy did not even smile.

“I have lost every bit of mine except the coat I now have on. We were crossing the ford when the tories attacked us. Every man had made a bundle of his clothes which he was carrying so that it might not get wet. Then the tories caught us.”

The woman smiled, then hesitated a moment, before her nimble fingers began to move. “I don’t know,” she explained; “I will look.” Without waiting for anything more to be explained she instantly departed from the barn. For a quarter of an hour the young soldier was left in his hiding-place. As the moments passed his alarm increased. Conjectures as to the cause of the woman’s continued absence began to arise in his mind. Had she gone to the camp of the tories? Was she planning to betray

him into the hands of his enemies? The suggestions became at last so alarming that he was about to forsake his place of hiding and seek the adjacent woods; but before he could act the woman once more entered the shed. In her hands were a pair of jean trousers or overalls, and a flannel shirt. Throwing these on the earthen floor she explained that they were the only garments to be had and that her strange visitor was welcome to them if he desired them. As soon as she had spoken she departed from the barn.

The eager young soldier at once donned the strange apparel. The sleeves of the flannel shirt extended far below his finger-tips, while the jeans at some time must have belonged to a man who was nearly six and a half feet tall. At all events, when his task of adorning himself was completed, the young soldier gazed ruefully at the ill-fitting garments. It was no time, however, to be critical, and, rolling back his sleeves and turning up the bottoms of the jeans, he started toward the low doorway. Stopping an instant to assure himself that the letter with which he had been intrusted was still safe in the pocket of his coat, he then prepared to depart from the barn.

As he stepped outside he saw the woman ap-

proaching from the house. A sharp signal from her for him to go back at once caused him to reënter the barn, where, perplexed and somewhat alarmed by the startling order he had received, he awaited her coming.

In a moment the woman entered. In her hands was a wooden bowl, but before she handed it to her strange guest she stopped and gazed at the young man before her. A faint trace of a smile occurred for a moment on her face and then she held forth the bowl.

The question in the eyes of the stranger was not ignored, and she explained that as yet no one from the camp had been seen, but fearful that at any moment some one might come, she advised her guest to remain for the present in his hiding-place. As soon as the simple breakfast had been eaten, however, the young soldier explained to his hostess that he must endeavor to pass the tory camp. In response to his question, she had previously explained that Cheraw Hill was about ten miles distant, and she had also described the most direct route to the spot where General Greene's army was encamped at the time. She had even offered to conduct him a part of the way, but, thanking her for her kind proffer as well as for her hospitality, the young soldier soon departed.

Instead of following the direct road that led near the camp from which he had escaped, he made a *détour* through the woods and fields and reëntered the road a mile or more beyond the hiding-place of the tory band. Even then he deemed it wiser to keep for the most part within the shelter of the adjacent woods, because at any moment he might be halted by some unknown men and compelled to explain his presence and his purpose. Only once did the young soldier see any men on the way, and then his own presence was not discovered as he concealed himself behind a huge tree near the rough road and watched a band of six horsemen pass. He was unable to decide on which side the men belonged, but convinced as he was that now he was not far distant from the place he was seeking, it seemed to him to be both wiser and safer not to make himself known to any passing men.

Before him at this time the road entered a narrow valley and the protecting trees were not to be found on either side. A fire had recently swept through the valley and left behind it many blackened stumps and charred timbers. Quickening his pace as he entered the exposed region, he moved rapidly until he came to a rough bridge of logs that spanned the

little stream which flowed through the valley. Just as he gained the bridge he glanced for a moment behind him and was startled as he beheld at the top of the hill a band of five mounted men who had just emerged from the road beyond. Whether or not he himself had been seen he did not know, but he instantly leaped to the ground beneath the bridge and endeavored to conceal himself under the rude structure.

Only a few moments had passed before the five men rode across the bridge. Trembling in his excitement and anxiously watching the band to see if they were about to stop, he was relieved when all five crossed and were proceeding on their way. Plainly his presence was unknown, and in a brief time he would be free to continue on his way.

“Can’t you put a little more gimp into that ther’ mule, Job?” one of the band called.

The startling query caused the young soldier hastily to clamber up the bank and as he gazed at the men he could see that the man in the rear was indeed Job, still mounted upon his strange steed. In advance were John and Solomon, while in front of them were two other mounted men whom he was unable to recognize. The sight of his former comrades, how-

ever, was sufficient of itself to arouse the watching boy, and darting into the road, he called, "Job! Solomon! Stop! Wait for me!"

The startling hail caused the men to halt instantly and as they looked back at the man who had shouted to them, every one drew his pistol. Forgetful of his strange appearance, unmindful of everything except that friends were near, the young soldier ran swiftly toward the band until he was halted by Solomon who called sharply, "Stop! Stop right where yo' are! Now give an account o' yourself," he added, as the approaching man quickly obeyed.

"I'm thinking you know who I am. If you don't, then Job does, or John there can tell you that I'm not a stranger. Have you forgotten Jim Fenton?"

"Glory be! It's —" began Job soberly.

"That's right, Job! You know who I am."

"It is our unknown friend," laughed John, as both he and Solomon recognized the man before them. "What are you doing here? Where did you get those clothes?" he added, as he broke into loud laughter.

"Yo' all might tell us now who yo' be," muttered Solomon.

"Can't tell you about it now. There's a

camp of Tories a little way back on the road. You'll have to wait till we get to Cheraw Hill and then you can tell me how you happened to be here. Here, Job, let me get up behind you. Your mule will carry double. I'm glad you got it again."

"Of all the impudent —" began Solomon with a scowl.

"Never mind that, Solomon," broke in the young soldier. "Cheraw Hill is the good word now."

CHAPTER XVII

AT CHERAW HILL

THE little party moved forward at once and conversation ceased. The news that a camp of the tories was not far away served to quicken the movements of the members of Light Horse Harry's legion who were advancing to Greene's camp, which was opposite Cheraw Hill. Indeed the apprehension of Solomon was so marked that he several times scowled at the young soldier mounted behind Job, and muttered in a manner that betrayed his feeling of annoyance. The recent addition to the little force, however, smiled good-naturedly at the lanky soldier and did not respond. An hour later the band entered the camp of the American soldiers.

"Our men are all here," said John to the young soldier as the six men dismounted. "Two hundred and eighty all told."

"Why weren't you with the legion?"

"We were until this morning. Then the colonel detailed us to follow after the main body to pick up stragglers and find out what was going on in the rear."

"If you had been picked off by the men from that tory camp you might have had your troubles," suggested the young soldier thoughtfully.

"Not knowing of the camp we were n't afraid," laughed John. "Maybe the camp is something you dreamed about."

"If I dreamed, then it was a nightmare. I was in it myself."

"What?"

"Yes, I was there, and so was Captain Johnston and Pete. I managed to get away, but I don't know whether or not they did."

"Who is Captain Johnston? Who is Pete? What were you doing in the camp? Tell me about it," said John, at once excited.

"Can't tell you now. I must find General Greene. I'm late with my letter, but still I'm in good luck to get through with it. I'm going to put it in General Greene's hands myself right away."

As the young soldier departed, he was able to see that the entire force which was in the camp did not much exceed two thousand men. Some were in uniform, but many were dressed just as they were when they had left their fields for the army. Not many horses were to be seen, aside from those of the mounted men

of Light Horse Harry's legion ; but apparently there was an air of determination manifest on every side, and this promised well for the test when it should come on the field. Some of the men were equipped with rifles, but the young soldier could see as he moved forward that many more had only muskets. Indeed the entire force seemed mostly to be untrained, and made up of serious-minded men from the farms. That they were deeply in earnest was manifest in their bearing as well as in the expression on their faces.

The young soldier had not gone far before he came face to face with Colonel Lee. The latter quickly returned the salute that was given him and was about to pass on when he was again hailed.

"Colonel Lee," said the young soldier quickly, "don't you remember me?"

The colonel stopped abruptly, looked quickly at the young man, and laughed as he said, "I confess your new uniform did confuse me a bit. Where did you get that suit?"

"A few miles back. I was mighty fortunate to get even this. The tories had me, and all the clothes I had left was my coat. A good woman, a friend of the colonies, gave me the rest of the suit."

"I confess I don't like her taste in clothes."

"But it was all she had in her house."

"Then she could n't do any more. How long have you been here?"

"I have just come."

"I thought you were to come ahead of the legion. Didn't you have a letter for the general?"

"I did have one, and I'm glad to say I have it yet. I want to give it to General Greene myself."

"I'll give it to him," said the colonel pleasantly, as he extended his hand.

"Thank you. I must deliver it myself. I know I am late, but General Greene will not blame me when I tell him why. Can you tell me where I can find him?"

"I'll take you to him."

"Thank you."

The colonel retraced his way and in a brief time halted before a tent within which, he explained, the commander was to be found. Light Horse Harry suggested that his companion should remain outside the tent, while he himself entered. In a brief time, the young colonel came to the entrance and beckoned for the young soldier to come.

When he was ushered into the tent the mes-

senger beheld the general seated before him, busily writing upon a small rude table. He glanced up as the visitor entered and the young soldier gazed with deep interest at the man before him. Light brown hair, blue eyes, a fair complexion, a large and somewhat heavy body were all characteristics of the man whom Washington had indicated repeatedly as the one he desired to succeed himself if his position should be made vacant. General Greene was comparatively a young man, less than forty years of age at this time, but the expression of his face was so serious, indeed to the young soldier sadness seemed to be the most pronounced element, that his visitor somehow felt that the great leader's life had been tragic. Strongly impressed as the young messenger was, he gazed so steadily at the man seated before him that for a time he did not speak.

"Colonel Lee informs me that you wish to see me on a matter of considerable importance," suggested the general at last quietly.

"I have brought you this message from General Washington."

The leader looked keenly at the man before him as the latter extended his hand with the missive. "You will be pleased to wait," he

said as he opened the letter, "I may wish to speak to thee again."

The words of General Greene reminded the young soldier of the story he frequently had heard in the army, how Nathanael Greene had been brought up strictly in the Quaker home of his father. The report was common that it was his love for military service that had finally banished him from his father's house. Indeed there were those who stoutly affirmed that Nathanael's father had soundly thrashed his son for his "wicked war ways," although the son was a man grown and larger than his father at the time. Others had meaningly declared that the real reason why Nathanael had been "read out of meeting" was due to the influence of sprightly Kate Littlefield who became Mrs. Nathanael Greene. Her love of mischief, her pride in the dress and interest in the appearance of the patriot militiamen, her satisfaction in the appearance of her soldierly young husband when he was clad in his regimentals of blue and buff, had all been too strong for the brave young officer from Rhode Island to resist. The young soldier, as he watched the face of the general before him, was prepared to believe that the reports he had heard had all been true.

In Valley Forge, in the terrible winter of 1777-8, he himself had often seen Mistress Greene there. Her vivacity, her courage, her unfailing enthusiasm had been known to the suffering soldiers, and her presence and example had been of no slight influence in strengthening the wavering faith of the men in the camp.

The recollection of these things was strong in the young soldier's thoughts as he watched the man before him.

At last the general looked up and said in a low voice, "Do you know what is in that letter?"

"A part of it I know."

"Did General Washington tell you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why?"

"I don't know, sir, unless it was because, because—"

"Yes?" said the general kindly, as the young soldier hesitated.

"Perhaps he wanted me to know what to tell you if the letter chanced to be lost."

"You are late in bringing it. Colonel Lee's legion is already here."

"Yes, sir."

"Why were you so late?"

"I lost my way for one thing, and then the tories got me."

"They captured you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell me about it."

Thus bidden, the young soldier related what had befallen him while he and his companions were crossing the ford.

"Do you know what the fate of Captain Johnston was?"

"No, sir."

"He was hanged. I received word this morning."

"Was Pete hanged too?"

"Who is Pete?"

"One of the men who was with the captain."

"All I know is that the captain and one of his men were hanged by the tories."

"Then it must have been Pete. He was the only one of our men that I saw besides Captain Johnston in the tory camp."

"What was Pete's other name?"

"I didn't know." Briefly the young soldier then related what had befallen him in the home of Pete and of Nancy his wife.

"That is only one instance among many," said General Greene. "I had no conception

of what conditions I must meet in coming south. I refused at first to accept the command, but General Washington and the cause proved to be too strong. I could not refuse."

"No, sir."

"I'm glad to hear you say that," said the general, his serious face lighting for a moment with a smile.

"That's the way I feel about it. I am sure every man in the army is glad you came."

"That is kind of you. We sometimes hear that one good turn deserves another. Feeling about it as you do, I am sure you will not oppose a suggestion which General Washington makes in his letter."

"*I* oppose? I am not one to say what must be opposed."

"You are quite right. The general's suggestion is that, if I desire, you will remain with us for a time and serve in Colonel Lee's legion."

For a moment the young soldier was silent. The suggestion was somewhat startling and certainly was not in the line of his own desire. He was eager to return, not only because of his position in the northern army, but also because his heart had been made heavy by what he had already seen and heard of condi-

tions in the South. He could feel that the keen glance of General Greene was upon him and that his decision was awaited with deep interest.

“ You thought I did right in accepting the command which General Gates gave up ? ” at last the general quietly asked.

“ Yes, sir. Every man in the army feels the same way. ”

“ What then do you think a man ought to do when I ask him to stay with me ? ” As the young soldier still was silent the general continued, “ The conditions here are worse than even I expected to find. I need every good man I can get and every one counts. If we are successful in holding back Lord Cornwallis we may be able to help our cause more than in any other way. The condition in the South is critical, and if we lose the South you understand as well as I what the effect will be upon our armies in the North. ”

“ Yes, sir. ”

“ Does that mean you will stay ? ”

“ How long do you expect me to stay ? ”

“ That will depend entirely upon what and how much we are able to do. I asked you a little while ago if you knew what General Washington said in his letter. You told me

you did in part, but the part which you did not know is most interesting to me."

"What is that?"

"His suggestion that you remain with Colonel Lee's legion."

"Did General Washington say that?"

"He did. He refers to a word which General Wayne gave him when he recommended you for the service you have done."

"My horse was shot when I tried to cross the ford."

"I think we can find another for you."

"I have n't any uniform. Colonel Lee is very sharp in what he expects in the appearance of his men — he and Mad Anthony."

"Yes, yes. That too can be arranged. I have a very important plan which Colonel Lee's legion is to undertake to-morrow. His men are in better condition than almost any in the camp, and that is one reason why I have selected the colonel to act with General Marion. Perhaps you have already heard of Francis Marion the Swamp Fox."

"Yes, sir, I have heard of the Swamp Fox. I'll stay and do my best."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SWAMP FOX

THE promise to remain, which the young soldier gave, was so lightly granted that what it cost him was not apparent. In the North, where his home was, the war, terrible as it was, had a character so different from that of the contest in the South, that they scarcely seemed to be parts of one common struggle for freedom. There, too, were his friends and there his labors had been known and more than appreciated by the leaders under whom he had served. All this was to be changed now. Instead of friends in his own ranks he was aware that the prejudices of Solomon and Job against him were not slight. John, it is true, seemed to be less unfriendly than his comrades, but even he did not manifest any warmth of feeling for the unknown young soldier who had been received with such favor by Light Horse Harry. The greater peril too that naturally must be faced in straggling engagements in the South was not ignored, but of none of those things did the young soldier

speak as he stood in the presence of the commander of the southern armies. There were other matters to talk about, and the personal preferences of any man were not to be dragged forward. Every one had his own burdens to bear and they made idle complainings seem weak and selfish, as well as out of place.

The following day found Light Horse Harry's legion ready for the duty which had been assigned to it, for the men of the legion, in spite of their recent long march, were in far better condition than any of the men under Greene's command. From some unknown source a horse had been secured for the new recruit, and clothing, not unlike that worn by his comrades, had also been provided. As a consequence the young soldier was less downcast than he had been the preceding day, and when the mounted members of the legion rode forth from Greene's camp, and the recruit found himself well mounted and riding beside John and Solomon, his interest in the expedition upon which they had started was keen, though he had not been informed what the destination was to be.

Solomon, however, was better informed, and as the troops proceeded leisurely on their way, the possession of knowledge which had

been denied his companions served to make the lanky trooper less bitter than he had been.

"We're to cross the Pedee and support the Swamp Fox," said Solomon glibly.

"What is General Francis Marion doing?" quickly asked the young soldier.

"He would n't be the 'Fox' if he told every one," replied Solomon. "Still I reckon I know what is expected of us."

"What's that?" inquired John.

"Why, Marion is somewhere between the Pedee and the Santee, and I reckon he's busy with the posts along the region."

"Do you mean the posts of the redcoats?" asked the young soldier.

"What did you think I meant?" demanded Solomon scornfully. "You did n't suppose he was there to hobnob with his friends?"

"I don't know much about it."

"Well, that's it. We'll have some lively times before we are a week older. I've a notion, too, that there is a piece of work cut out for us that will keep us awake."

"What is it, Solomon? You're the wise man of the party and know more about our plans than any of us. Why don't you tell us?" said John.

"It is n't safe to talk everywhere nor to

every one," said Solomon proudly. It was manifest that the trooper's knowledge was greatly enjoyed by himself at least, and his feeling of importance had relieved his grudge against the newcomer.

"Go on, Solomon; we're listening," continued John.

"Well, two or three of us have an idea that when we join Marion's men, we'll —"

"We'll *what?*" asked John impatiently, as his companion hesitated.

"We'll be very busy."

"Solomon, you don't know what you are talking about!"

"That may be so, and then again it may not be."

"You certainly are a wise man," laughed John.

"I know a thing or two and some things besides."

"I wish you knew what we are going to do."

"I do know."

"You think you do."

"I know I do."

"Know what?"

"What the plan is that Light Horse Harry and General Greene agreed upon."

"How do you know?"

"They told me."

"Who told you?"

"Both men. I was called into General Greene's tent and he and the colonel asked me what I thought of it."

"Thought of what?"

"The plan."

"Too bad you cannot help them."

"I did help."

"Oh, you did, did you?"

"I did that. We'll get that redcoat."

"What redcoat?"

"Colonel Campbell."

"Where is he?"

"Georgetown."

"Why that's down the Pedee!"

"Don't you suppose I know where it is?"

"I wasn't sure. How many men has Campbell there?"

"About two hundred."

"You think we can get him?"

"When Light Horse Harry and the Swamp Fox and—and—"

"And you," suggested John, winking at the young soldier as he spoke.

"Yes, I reckon that's so," acknowledged Solomon. "When we three agree, why the thing is as good as settled."

"Does the Fox know about it?"

"Not yet."

"You'll tell him, though, as soon as we find him?"

"Either I or Light Horse Harry will tell him."

"Does General Greene approve?"

"He does."

"Approve what?"

"The plan."

"What plan?"

"The plan to get Campbell."

"What is the plan?"

"Why, it's like this, you see: Campbell has a garrison of a couple of hundred men there at Georgetown. He has thrown up some defenses in front of the place but we'll brush them away as if they were paper. Between these defenses and the town there's a palisade and some works have been thrown up. These are what Campbell really depends upon to hold the town. His troops are scattered about the place, and some of them are even in the country outside the town."

"Solomon, how do you know all this?"

"General Greene showed me his drawings. He had sent scouts down there and they had brought back a plan of the whole thing."

"That's good," said the young soldier thoughtfully. Both he and John were now deeply interested and really were convinced that their lanky comrade was not inventing the tale he was telling. "What is the plan of attack?"

Solomon scowled as he heard the question, but his feeling of importance was too pronounced to permit him long to remain silent. "If the Swamp Fox approves our plan, and he will, because it's a good one, we'll send the infantry down the Pedee. All the men with Marion and Light Horse Harry that have horses will come up near Georgetown in the night. The infantry will be divided into two parties—one will force its way to the quarters of Colonel Campbell and get him, while the other will put itself between the garrison and the little fort and keep the red-coats from getting into it. Then the word will be given us—I told you that all of us that have horses will creep up near the town—and we'll rush in and help the others."

"Solomon, is that your plan or General Greene's?" inquired John soberly.

"I am not just sure," replied Solomon proudly.

"It's a good plan."

"I reckon it is."

When the legion of Light Horse Harry at last arrived at the place where Marion's men were found, the keenest interest of the young soldier was aroused in watching the Swamp Fox himself.

"He's a little fellow," he said to John when he first beheld the man. The general, small and slight, was mounted upon a large, fiery horse. A round-bodied jacket of coarse red cloth, a cap of leather, upon which was fastened a small crescent of silver, and a short "cut-and-thrust" sword, which was buckled to his waist, provided the distinguishing outfit of the bold and dashing leader. A stern, almost hard expression of his face, which was dark from his long exposure to sun and wind, was almost as marked as his strange garb. His manner was very quiet, he had very little to say even when Light Horse Harry's legion arrived, and his eyes looked as if he had very little sleep, a surmise which the young soldier afterwards learned was correct. In spite of his stern manner, however, Marion's sincerity and kindness were both manifest, while the devotion of his followers to him was as marked as was that of the followers of Anthony Wayne in the North to their own dashing leader.

"Yes, sir," acknowledged John. "The Swamp Fox is a little fellow."

"Where did he get that name?"

"The Swamp Fox? Why, he and Sumter, the Game Cock, have been leading Tarleton, the redcoat, a lively dance. Tarleton burned the houses, killed the cattle, and destroyed every kind of property wherever he went on his raids. One of the things Tarleton wanted was to keep the line of travel open across the Santee, but Sumter and Marion made it so lively for him that he had to keep a whole British regiment on guard at Nelson's Ferry. Of course he tried to catch Sumter and Marion, and he'd follow them through the swamps and into the woods. Sometimes he'd get where he could almost put his hand on them, but they were as lively as fleas, and he'd find when he slapped his hand down that he had n't got the flea after all.

"One time he'd been chasing both Sumter and Marion for hours through the swamps. At last Tarleton turned to his men and yelled, 'Come, boys! We'll go back and we'll soon corner the Game Cock, but as for this old fox Marion the devil himself could not catch him.' I reckon Tarleton knew what he was talking about," John added with a laugh, "for I

don't know of any one who is better acquainted with the devil."

"Is that the way the name came to be given General Marion?"

"Yes, that's the story."

"Does he do most of his work here?"

"He has been here lately. He was at Fort Moultrie and Savannah, but he had to be away from Charleston for a time because he had hurt his leg. That's the reason why he wasn't made prisoner there. When Cornwallis started on his invasion of the upper country, Marion went into North Carolina, but when Gates started towards Camden the Swamp Fox came down here into the country between the Santee and Pedee. He has n't been idle since he has been here, either," John added with a laugh.

"Why has he been here?"

"I reckon one reason is because he is needed here. After Charleston surrendered, Cornwallis sent a messenger to the people here with the word that everybody now must be good and promise to be friends of King George. One of our men, Major John James, dressed up like a farmer and came down here to see if the report was true. While he was here he met Captain Ardesoif, one of the redcoats, who told him that he had come to order the people

to take up arms for his Satanic — I mean his Britannic — Majesty, King George III. Major James did n't just like what the captain said nor the tone of voice in which he said it, so the upshot of the whole thing was that the major flatly said the people wouldn't do that while grass grew and water ran down hill. Then Captain Ardesoif felt hurt and suggested to the major that it would afford him the greatest pleasure in the world to hang his visitor to the nearest tree. The major jumped up and took hold of the back of the chair in which he had been sitting, waved the chair a while in Ardesoif's face and then took his horse and rode home. When he got there he told his friends and neighbors what Ardesoif had said. The people were mostly Scots, Welshmen, or Huguenots (Marion himself belongs to a Huguenot family), and they instantly agreed to stand by Marion. That was the way the work began. You'll have to ask the Swamp Fox for the rest of it."

"How many men has he?"

"The numbers vary — sometimes twenty, sometimes seventy — never more, though just now, with Light Horse Harry's legion on the spot, there will be enough to make some excitement before we are many hours older."

CHAPTER XIX

THE LOST ARMY

“WHAT about our plan, Solomon?” inquired John, as his lanky comrade approached the place where the two boys were standing.

“We’re here on time for our part,” replied Solomon soberly; “the Swamp Fox and Light Horse Harry are never behind time.”

“What is ‘our part’?”

“That is what I told you.”

“No, you did n’t, Solomon. What are we to do?”

“Wait till the footmen have gone down the river. If they did as they were told they are now there on that island yonder. They were to drop down the river last night, hide on the island all of to-day, and then to-night make their attack on the redcoats. When they do that we are to join them.”

“How shall we know whether or not they are ready for us?”

“You’ve been away from the South so long perhaps you’ve forgotten how the owls hoot,

and the squirrels chatter, and the panthers scream."

"That's right. Those calls are the signals of Marion's men, are n't they?" replied John.

"They surely are. We shall hear them to-night, too."

"Captain Carnes is the leader of the foot soldiers, is n't he?"

"He is that, and a good man, too."

"Suppose he and his men should be discovered?" suggested the young soldier.

"Can't 'suppose' anything of the kind. Captain Carnes is n't that kind. Besides no one will be on the lookout for a boat in the river, to say nothing of the swamps along the shore. He and his men could stay there for weeks and not a tory in Georgetown be a whit the wiser. You boys would do better to turn in now and get some sleep."

The suggestion of the older soldier was quickly followed, and in a brief time both boys were soundly sleeping in the shelter they fortunately had secured. It was a little past midnight when they were aroused. When they responded to the call they discovered that all the mounted men were in readiness, apparently awaiting only the signal for the advance. The stars were shining in the sky,

and in spite of the hour the great forest was not dark.

In silence the men were waiting, a strange and impressive stillness also resting over the entire scene. Suddenly a horseman appeared from the rough road in front, and as he drew near two men instantly joined him.

"That's the Swamp Fox and Light Horse Harry," whispered John to the young soldier who was beside him. Both boys were excitedly watching the three men, as indeed were all the troop, and in a brief time General Marion turned, raised his right hand, in which his short sword was carried, and spoke in a low voice to one of the men near him. Then word was quietly passed among the waiting troopers and the advance was begun.

Almost like moving shadows the men rode forward. Not a word was spoken, although a halt was frequently made and it was manifest that a sign of some kind was awaited before the final advance was continued. Sometimes an owl would hoot before the word to move forward would be given, sometimes squirrels would be heard chattering in the near-by trees, and once there came the fierce, wild cry of a panther from the forest beyond. The young soldier, recalling what Solomon had said con-

cerning the ways of calling Marion's men, was not at a loss now to understand what the weird cries meant.

Again the band halted and Solomon whispered, "We're right on the border of the town. There!" he added savagely as the reports of muskets rang out, "That's what we are all waitin' fo'! Here's the word."

A sharp, clear call was heard, and instantly the band of horsemen rushed forward. Although the young soldier was thinking chiefly of his own part in the coming struggle, he was aware of the tense spirit of determination that seemed to possess every man. The critical moment had arrived.

The astonishment of leaders and men was great when it was discovered that silence rested over the place. The bodies of infantry were both holding the places assigned them, but it was seen that Colonel Campbell, the British commander, was a prisoner and not another British soldier was within sight.

Solomon, who in the dash into the town had been separated from his two companions, soon rejoined them and said, "The redcoats are in their quarters and they've barricaded the doors."

"Break down the doors, then!" exclaimed John in a low voice.

"We haven't anything to help us do that. If anybody creeps up to the quarters he'll be shot down like a rabbit. If we had only one little cannon we'd knock the houses and men, too, into flinders."

"Can't something be done with the colonel—the one who is a prisoner?"

"No."

"What is to be done then?"

"Wait a spell an' see."

The waiting continued until the first faint streaks of the dawn appeared, and then the attacking party withdrew. It was known that not even the prisoner, the British colonel, was taken away, although it was learned afterward that he had been left on parole. Mystified, disappointed, almost angry, the troopers withdrew, the young soldier silent after his usual manner, and John angry and disgusted at what he termed the fizzle of the leaders.

"That's the trouble with the colonel and the Swamp Fox, too."

"What's the trouble?"

"They're both too tender of their men. There we were right in front of the little fort! If we had rushed it in the dark we'd have got it."

"And lost a good many men in getting it," suggested the young soldier.

"Very likely, but one must expect that. We had everything right in our hand and then we let the whole thing go. It's too bad."

"Never mind, John," said Solomon, "our work is n't done yet."

"What do you mean?"

"Colonel Lee wants us to go to Lieutenant Manning."

"Wants whom to go?"

"You and me."

"Just us two?"

"Light Horse Harry said this man was to go with us. Leastwise I reckon he meant this man though he did n't call him by name. I say, stranger," Solomon added almost angrily to the young soldier, "have n't you got any name?"

"I have."

"Why don't you tell us what it is? Are n't ashamed of it, are yo'?"

"No, sir."

"Then why don't you tell us who you are?"

"If Colonel Lee did n't give you my name then I must not be expected to use it."

"It's mighty queer," muttered Solomon. "Well," he added, "I reckon you all are to go with John an' me."

"I'm ready. When do we start?"

"After we've had some breakfast."

"Where do we go?"

"I told yo' — toe join Lieutenant Manning."

"And who is he?"

"Don't yo' all know who Lieutenant Manning is?" demanded Solomon in surprise. "Why, he's the biggest little man in the South."

"Glad to hear," laughed the young soldier. "I'm sorry I did n't know."

"Just now he happens to be in command o' the lost army."

"The lost army? What's that?"

"An' yo' don't mean to tell me you all don't know what the 'lost army' is! Why, I reckoned everybody had heard o' that."

"I'm sorry I don't know. Please tell me what it is."

"Why, the lost army is — is — the army what — what is lost."

"You don't mean it? Who lost it?"

"Nobody lost it. It lost itself."

"And we are to go to it?"

"Yes, sir."

"But how can we go to it if it is lost?"

"I reckon I can find a way."

"Then it is n't lost now?"

"Yes, sir. It's th' lost army."

"But it can't be lost if you know where it is. What is it, anyway?"

"Yo' tell him, John," suggested Solomon.
"He gets me twisted."

"What Solomon means," explained John, "is that some time ago a lot of Scotch Highlanders settled at Cross Creek and they haven't been very strong in their love for the colonies. Having been conquered once by the king they seemed somehow to like the treatment and have been wanting to keep it up ever since."

"That's strange," said the young soldier thoughtfully. "You would think that once having come over here so that they might have more liberty, they would be the very ones who would fight for it."

"Some of them are all right but most of them are not very strong for it. They don't appear to think they are living in much of a country unless it has a king. Still, some good work has been done among them, and at last a good-sized body was raised and it is supposed to be on its way to join Greene now."

"To be friends of the colonies?" asked the young soldier quickly.

"They profess to be, or at least that is what

is reported, but General Greene, for reasons of his own, is afraid of them, and that is why Lieutenant Manning was sent to their camp to lead the men to join the army."

"How many of the Highlanders are there?"

"It's said there are about four hundred."

"What!"

"That's the report."

"What can one man do with such a mob?"

"You don't know young Manning! He is n't much more than a boy, but in spite of that fact he's the pluckiest man in the Carolinas. He does n't stop at anything, and it's because he is n't afraid. You won't be surprised when you see him for yourself."

"When do we start?"

"Just as soon as the colonel gives the word."

Not long after the return of the legion to the place from which the advance upon the British post had been made, the word, to which Solomon had referred, was given by Colonel Lee himself. The leader's anxiety was manifest in the minute directions which he gave the three horsemen. Although the nameless young soldier had no acquaintance with the region through which they were to

pass, he did not protest against the duty assigned him, and with John's story of the lost army still fresh in his mind, he was in a measure even eager to start on what he believed was likely to prove to be an exciting adventure. The latest word from Lieutenant Manning, so Colonel Lee explained, was that he and the Scotchmen were not more than fifteen miles distant and their camp would easily be gained before sunset.

"It's going to rain, I'm afraid," said the colonel as he turned away, "but you must n't stop till you find the lieutenant. He will know what is best for you to do then. We shall want to have word of the conditions, so some one of you probably will be sent right back with it."

Soon after the trio departed the threatening storm broke. In a brief time the rough roads were heavy and wet, while the three men were speedily drenched. They kept steadily on their way, however, trusting to Solomon to guide them aright. The lanky horseman had little to say as the afternoon waned, and somehow his feeling of anxiety was shared by both his companions, though neither openly referred to his fears.

The daylight was nearly gone and the tired

horses of the three riders were slowly picking their way in the mud when the young soldier suddenly stopped, and, turning his head to listen, said, "What's that?"

"Somebody is coming," whispered John a moment later.

"There's more than one," suggested Solomon.

"That's right. There are two," said the young soldier, just as two men, spattered with mud and mounted on mud-bespattered horses, appeared in the bend in the road which the three horsemen had recently passed.

"Let's get away," suggested John nervously.

"Hold on. It's Lieutenant Manning himself!" said Solomon in a low voice. "I'll call and we'll wait for him here."

Even the surprise at meeting Solomon and his companions could not conceal the anger of the young officer. He was unwilling to stop and insisted that the three men should ride forward with him.

"We came to find out about the lost army," suggested Solomon to Lieutenant Manning.

"Oh, you did, did you? Well, I wish I knew where it is."

“Has it gone?”

“Every man jack!”

“When?”

“That’s what I want to find out. I had a double guard last night and made the rounds of the camp myself every hour. But along toward morning I found the whole camp deserted.”

“And you don’t know where the men went?”

“I’ve followed their tracks till the rain washed them out. Tarleton is n’t more than six or eight miles away, so I reckon I know which direction they took. And I’ll get them yet. I’ll get every mother’s son of them!”

CHAPTER XX

THE FLIGHT OF THE LOST ARMY

SOMETHING of the enthusiasm of the young lieutenant was imparted to his comrades as they listened to his fearless words. In spite of the fact that the young officer was only of medium size, his well-knit body, his restless energy, his unshaken confidence that if he should be able to overtake the lost army he could make the recreant men listen to his call, alike impressed the little band that had met him, and every one was more than willing to continue the search, in spite of the overwhelming numbers of the disloyal body.

Swiftly and silently the men rode forward over the muddy road, but they had not gone far before, near the road in front of them, they beheld a small house of logs and in front of it, standing in the road, was a man leaning upon a long rifle and keenly watching the approaching horsemen. It was too late now to turn back or even to halt, for their approach was already discovered.

Without checking his speed, the young lieu-

tenant in a low voice said, "I don't like the appearance of that fellow ahead of us. It looks to me like he is on guard. You all keep still and let me do the talking."

The suspicions of the leader were confirmed when the band halted in front of the waiting man. The light was sufficiently clear to enable the newcomers to see the little rag of red which was sewed to his hat. It was manifest that the man was a tory and his attitude as guard implied that he was not alone.

"Have you seen a force of two or three hundred men passing this place within an hour or two?" inquired the lieutenant sharply.

"How long ago?" drawled the man, as he gazed with evident interest at the speaker and his companions.

"Not more than two or three hours."

"What yo' all want o' 'em?"

"I want to find them first of all."

"Oh, ho! I reckon you all are some of Greene's men!"

Before the lieutenant or his friends were fully aware of what was done, the guard placed a finger in his mouth and sent forth a prolonged and shrill whistle. As if they had sprung out of the very ground, a dozen or more armed men quickly surrounded the little force.

In the hat of every one was a red rag, and Lieutenant Manning was instantly aware that he and his followers were face to face with a desperate band of tories.

If the young officer had any thoughts of riding down the surrounding men or of calling upon his companions to cut their way through, he betrayed no evidence. Leaning forward on his horse's neck and, as he spoke, pointing to a portmanteau strapped to the saddle in front of him, he said quickly, "Don't make any noise! I have something here which will ruin Greene, and help hang the Game Cock and the Swamp Fox."

"Are they near here?" inquired one of the tories in a whisper.

"Yes, sir, they are. For one, I'm too near them too. They are fighting mad."

"Wait till Tarleton hears of it," said another boastfully. "He'll give 'em a dose that is good for mad fits or any other kind."

"That's all right, too," laughed the lieutenant. "But I'm afraid he's too far away to be of much help to us."

"He won't be, long," said the man meaningly.

"That's good. But can't you get word to him right away?"

"I reckon he or Lord Cornwallis or both o' 'em are makin' better time on their way toe us than we could if we should try toe get toe them."

"That 's great!" exclaimed the lieutenant in apparent enthusiasm. "They can't come too fast or too soon to suit us."

"You 're a good fellow! I reckon you all have just left the rebels?"

"We have — only a little while ago. We had our troubles, too."

"Yo' won't have 'em long. The whole colony is up in arms an' is waitin' fo' Colonel Tarleton an' his cavalry toe come."

"Where are we to meet him?"

"Everybody is makin' fo' Steve's Run fo' toe join Colonel Pyle there befo' Colonel Tarleton comes."

"Yes, yes. I know that. But what I don't know is whether or not we shall find Colonel Pyle and the Highlanders at Steve's Run. Can you tell me about that?"

"I reckon I can, seein' as how they all passed here less than two hours ago."

"Good! Fine! Then that 's where we 'll look for 'em! I know where Steve's Run is, and the sooner we can make it the better it will be for us."

"Yo' all'd better take these," suggested the man as he held out a small bundle of red rags. "Put 'em on your hats. It'll save you a heap o' trouble. Know th' way toe Steve's Run?"

"I reckon I do."

"Hold on a minute till I get my horse an' I'll go with you. You all don't want toe lose your way to-night. It's a-goin' toe be darker'n Egypt."

"No, sir, not fo' the world," said the lieutenant. "You are needed here and we all will find our way. I'm sure I can find th' way. If we should happen to meet some of Greene's men or run across the Swamp Fox they'd hang every one of us for deserting."

"Maybe yo're right, sir," responded the man in evident relief. Turning to his companions he looked questioningly at them as if he was seeking their advice. The moment was critical and the companions of the young lieutenant were quietly watching their leader, prepared instantly to do his bidding whatever it might be.

In a moment, however, the fears of all were relieved when the entire band of Tories stepped back apparently unsuspecting of the horsemen, and every one glad at the thought that he was not to accompany the band into the perils of a

ride through the darkness, in which a force of the feared and hated men of the Swamp Fox's legion might at any moment appear.

"We'll be going on," suggested the lieutenant. "If any one comes or asks if you have seen us tell him we've gone to Steve's Run to find Colonel Pyle's men and to meet Colonel Tarleton."

"We'll tell him," replied the guard, "though you all haven't told us who you are."

"Why, yes, I have," said the lieutenant promptly. "I told you we had come from Greene's camp and were on our way to Steve's Run."

Before any further questions could be asked the lieutenant spoke in a low voice to his companions and the band instantly departed.

"I think that was a close call," suggested Solomon, when a safe distance had been placed between the band and the guard.

"It isn't a circumstance to what you all will get right soon."

"What's next?"

"Back to Light Horse Harry! Come! I know the way into another road and we must get there before Tarleton can make Steve's Run!"

Not another word was spoken as the band

followed the lieutenant in what almost seemed a pathless way through the woods. The dripping branches of the leafless trees, the soft ground into which the horses at times sank deeply, the holes and bogs, and, above all, the fear of discovery, made the ride one of peril; but at last the energetic lieutenant found the road he was seeking. A brief rest was then granted the horses, and in a short time the entire band was speeding toward the place where they hoped to find Colonel Lee.

There was no opportunity for rest after the wild ride was begun. Splashed with mud, the riders still steadily held to their way. Their horses were soon covered with foam and were breathing heavily as they raced over the muddy road. Every man, however, was, in a measure at least, aware of the need of haste, and there was no time for mercy to beast or man. When three hours had passed, the camp of Light Horse Harry was entered and there Lieutenant Manning at once sought the leader. To the lieutenant's companions it did not seem possible that there had really been an interview, so speedy was the return of the energetic young officer. "Get ready," he said to Solomon, pausing only for a moment. "Get fresh horses. We're going to start in three minutes."

Solomon with a growl informed his recent companions of Lieutenant Manning's order. Before they were fully prepared they could see that the men of the legion were assembling, though in the darkness it was impossible to determine how many were to go on the expedition.

At last, when the band was ready, Light Horse Harry himself stepped forward into the light of the blazing camp-fire and spoke. "My first plan," he said, "was to move against Tarleton to-morrow, for I have had word that he has just crossed the Haw River to help the Tories there. They need his help, I am sure; but I would rather let the redcoat do what he can there than to lose this lost army. If this revolt is not checked now we may suffer more than we shall from Tarleton's cowardly deeds. Lieutenant Manning is to guide us, for he knows the road to Steve's Run where Colonel Pyle and his Highlanders are now waiting for Tarleton to come to their rescue. I know every one of you will do his best to make the redcoats' coming useless. I myself and some of our legion must go to head off this insurrection, and I believe that when General Greene shall next hear from you, the report of what you do to-night will be something which will inspire

the whole army in the South. I expect Light Horse Harry's legion to give a good account of itself."

There were no cheers given in response to the colonel's stirring words, but the very quiet that pervaded the troops was as impressive as it was promising. In a brief time the word to start was given and the band departed in the darkness for its march to Steve's Run.

The legion moved steadily, but there was no attempt to make undue haste. Aware, as the men all were, that a serious engagement might be had, there was manifest a strong purpose to reserve the strength of all until the testing time should come.

In front of the force two tory prisoners were compelled to march, so that if in the light of the early morning, the country people should discover the advance, as was more than probable, the impression might be deepened that it was the army of Colonel Tarleton himself which was approaching. The fact that the garb of Light Horse Harry's legion was not unlike that which was worn by Tarleton's men, was also counted upon to aid in producing the impression that it was the force of the detested British colonel himself which was moving upon Steve's Run.

This expectation was strengthened when, not long after sunrise, two men from Pyle's camp were met, and neither betrayed any suspicion of the advancing force, both supposing it to be that which was expected from Colonel Tarleton. Willingly the two tories rode back to Pyle's camp bearing the request of Colonel Lee that Pyle "would have his men drawn up on the side of the road so that plenty of room would be left for the wearied troops, after their forced march, to pass by to their own position in the camp."

When the van of the approaching force was first seen by the lost army which was drawn up along the roadside in accordance with Lee's request, a mighty shout of relief went up from the tory lines. "God save the king!" they shouted again and again.

Silently the bronzed and sturdy men of the legion advanced. Light Horse Harry passed in front of the tory lines until at last he halted before the recreant Colonel Pyle. Reaching from his saddle, Colonel Lee stretched forth his hand to grasp that of the treacherous leader before him. A sigh seemed to rise from the silent legion, for every man knew that this action of the leader was the signal previously agreed upon that an engagement should imme-

diately begin. Before the tory leader's hand was taken, however, Colonel Pyle shouted, "It's a trick! This is Light Horse Harry! It's Light Horse Harry's legion! Fight! Fight, men! Fight for your lives!"

Instantly the action began. The startled tories, their hearts already cowardly, were not prepared for the sudden and swift onslaught. Men fell on every side. For a moment the semblance of a struggle was made and many were shot by the roadside. The silence that had rested over the camp was rudely broken by the cries and hoarse shouts of struggling men.

But the engagement did not last long, for the suddenness and vigor of the attack by Light Horse Harry's legion could not be stayed. With wild cries the Highlanders soon broke and fled for the shelter of the adjacent forest. Many of them did not cease fleeing until at last they were safe in their homes among the Carolina hills. As for their leader, Colonel Pyle, in the terror that overpowered him, he fled for refuge to a little near-by pond. Dashing into the water he crouched among the weeds, leaving only his nose above the surface. There he lay concealed until the last of his enemies departed and it was safe for him to

leave his shelter in Bloody Pond, as the little sheet of water was soon named. The legion returning to the camp were confident that the reports which the terrified tories would scatter would do more for the cause of the patriots than a victory in battle would have secured. Nor were they disappointed, although in the excitement which they found upon their return to the camp even the lost army was speedily forgotten.

CHAPTER XXI

TOWARD NINETY-SIX

"THERE 's been a battle," exclaimed John to the young soldier not long after the main army under General Greene had been gained.

"Where?"

"At the cowpens."

"At the *what*?"

"At the cowpens," laughed John. "That 's a big pasture field down near Spartanburg. You know where that is —"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the young soldier eagerly. "But tell me about the battle! Who won?"

"We did. That is, Morgan, the rifleman, and his men won it. You see, General Greene sent Morgan down into South Carolina to get all the recruits he could find. He was doing pretty well, when Tarleton was sent after him."

"Then Tarleton was n't here at all as the 'lost army' believed?"

"He was n't as near as they thought he was. It was Morgan who was nearest him.

Well, at the cowpens, Tarleton attacked Morgan and his men. It was a glorious —”

“Yes, but who won?” demanded the young soldier impatiently.

“That’s what I’m telling you. Tarleton was beaten out of his boots! He lost nearly all the men he had with him! I reckon it’s the first time he ever had such an experience. He’d been chasing small bands that could n’t do anything against him. Oh, he thought he was a brave fellow, Tarleton did, because he scared the women and frightened the children and cut to pieces a few men he happened to catch in some place where they could n’t do much of anything against him!”

“What happened to Tarleton himself?”

“Oh, he got away all right. You can trust him for that! He won’t let his bacon get into any danger. You can rest on that every time.”

“What’s to be done next?”

“All I know is what Light Horse Harry just told me.”

“What’s that?”

“He says Greene and Morgan together are too weak to face Lord Cornwallis, and the colonel’s idea is that General Greene will just try to lead the redcoats a merry chase until they are tired out and quit.”

“How does he propose to do that? He may wear out his own army while he's trying to break down Cornwallis.”

“That I cannot tell you. You will have to wait and find it out for yourself.”

Neither of the boys, however, had long to wait. The energetic Lord Cornwallis, the ablest of all the British generals in the Revolution, instantly began a swift pursuit of the Americans who had had the temerity to defeat the redoubtable Tarleton at the cowpens. The retreat of the little American army before the onrushing soldiers of King George is one of the marvels of history and a lasting tribute to the military genius of the “blacksmith from Rhode Island.” The legion of Light Horse Harry for the greater part of the time served as a buffer between the two armies, ready at all times to cover the retreating army in front and to receive the attack of the red-coats pressing on from behind. So swift were the movements that many times the soldiers of one army were within sight of their enemies. Stragglers and supplies were cut off. The British had destroyed much of their light baggage to render their pursuit the swifter. Lord Cornwallis and his officers themselves set the example for their followers, by

being the first to set fire to all their possessions that were not absolutely essential.

Eagerly the redcoats pressed forward and swiftly the patriots withdrew. Good order was maintained, but what the end of the mad chase was to be no one could foresee. Even Providence seemed to favor the cause of the colonies. When the fleeing army crossed the Catawba River and then the Yadkin and still later the Dan, the patriots had barely gained the bank they sought before their enemies were seen on the opposite shore. In each case, however, a heavy rain caused the waters of the already swollen rivers to rise, and the pursuing redcoats, delayed by the event, were unable to overtake the army in front of them. They were being led farther and farther from the base of their supplies. As guards necessarily had to be left at different places the lines were steadily becoming thinner. When the third sudden rise in the intervening rivers occurred and the waters of the Dan in a night became unfordable, Lord Cornwallis unexpectedly gave up the chase and turned back to Hillsboro.

When Cornwallis retired, then Greene too turned back on his course, determined to give his enemies no rest. He was aware that in an

open engagement many of his poorly equipped and untrained men would be no match for the disciplined troops of the king. However, if he could not win on the battlefield he was not hopeless of final victory, for it might be possible to wear out the troops which he could not expect to conquer.

The recruits that now flocked to join Greene's army led the general to believe that his best plan was to turn again toward North Carolina in search of the army of Cornwallis. This search was rewarded when the two armies came together in an engagement at Guilford Court House (near Greensboro).

Here the untrained militia, consisting mostly of boys and men who had come from the neighboring farms to serve under Greene, fulfilled the fears of the intrepid leader. At the first fire they broke and fled. The rest of the patriot army, however, held its ground so stubbornly that the loss of the British was heavy. At the end the American troops retreated in good order. And that night there was great elation in the patriots' camp, when a spy brought the report from the British camp that the redcoats had lost so many men that Lord Cornwallis had decided that it would be unwise to attempt to pursue, and

that he was compelled to retire to Wilmington to obtain fresh supplies from the ships there.

"A few more 'victories' like Guilford Court House will see the army of Cornwallis wiped out," exclaimed John to the young soldier.

"Yes, we were driven from the field, but the new recruits will soon fill up our ranks and we'll be as good as ever. The other fellows will be like a string, pretty soon. We can break it almost anywhere."

When the report was confirmed that Lord Cornwallis had really retired to Wilmington, General Greene at once moved across North Carolina into South Carolina, where the British forces now were under the command of Lord Rawdon. Not long after this a battle was fought at Hobkirk's Hill (near Camden). Here too Greene's army was once more forced to retreat, but not before so heavy a loss had been inflicted on the enemy that the red-coats were unable to follow up the advantage they had gained, and, as John said, "it seemed as if General Greene was going to do with Rawdon what he had already done with Cornwallis—beat his enemy by being himself defeated. He'll win out by wearing them out," asserted John confidently. And indeed it did

appear as if the enthusiastic young patriot's words might be fulfilled, for the active struggle ceased for a time, while the two well-nigh exhausted armies both sought a rest. The army of Greene spent the summer among the hills of the Santee, near Camden.

Before this time had arrived, however, the legions of Lee and Marion had been busy day and night. Expeditions against small posts held by the tories or British soldiers had been successfully made, and Fort Motte and Fort Granby had fallen into their hands, while the sturdy followers of the Game Cock had taken Orangeburg. The colony, or state, of Georgia had been once more thrown open to the Americans, when Lee had so obstinately and boldly attacked Augusta that the place was surrendered.

The only fort in the interior now held by the British was Ninety-Six, and, up to this time, every effort of the Americans to take it had failed. This place was strongly fortified and garrisoned and it was one of Greene's fondest hopes to secure the important position.

This hasty glimpse at the conditions and events of the times is necessary in order to enable us to follow understandingly the ex-

periences of some of the young members of Light Horse Harry's legion in whom we are especially interested.

"Something for us to do," said John lightly one night, as he sought the nameless young soldier who now had become one of his warmest friends.

"There's nothing new in that," laughed his comrade. "We've been doing something ever since we came. Light Horse Harry doesn't seem to know how to rest. There's one thing, though, and that is that his men are better off than any in Greene's army."

"How's that?"

"Why, none of us is barefooted, we have good horses, and we have n't had to suffer, as most of the poor fellows have."

"That's so," acknowledged John, "and I reckon we have Light Horse Harry himself to thank for it. He helps us because he can't do anything else. I mean, his one weakness is that he's too considerate of his men. He'd have won some victories he did n't get if he had n't tried to save his men so much."

"There are worse things than that, are n't there?"

"I don't know. When a man does strike he ought to strike hard, ought n't he?"

"What's your 'something new,' John?" inquired the young soldier abruptly.

"I'll tell you. There's a messenger coming from Rawdon to Ninety-Six."

"Yes?" The young soldier was interested at once, but his quiet manner was unchanged as he gazed at John, who was deeply excited.

"We're to get him, that's all."

"Who are 'we'?"

"You, Solomon, Job, and myself."

"Who found out about the messenger?"

"I don't know. Light Horse Harry told me about it himself."

"We're to take our horses?"

"Of course."

"Job's mule, too?"

"You can't separate Job from that beast," laughed John.

"I don't want to. That mule has done more for the legion than any man has done. It's the joke of every one."

"It's a wonderful animal. It certainly is. It can do almost everything but talk. It'll tire out every horse —"

"That's the difference between a mule and a horse, anyway," broke in John. "A horse will go till it drops dead. A mule will kick and quit before it gets that far. There's the

same difference between a negro and a white man. The white man will keep on till he drops in his tracks, but a negro will quit like a mule."

"When are we to start?"

"That's for you and Light Horse Harry to say."

"For me? I don't understand."

"You're to be the commander of the expedition."

"Who said so?"

"The colonel. He wants to see you, that is if you are not too busy to have a few words with him," laughed John.

"Solomon won't want to go then."

"Never you mind Solomon. I'll attend to him. He'll be as gentle as Job's mule when we're ready to start. Go and see what the colonel wants."

The young soldier, acting on the suggestion, speedily sought the colonel's quarters and remained with the leader a half hour or more. When he returned to the place where John was waiting, he reported that the four men were to leave camp immediately.

In spite of John's assurance Solomon was decidedly glum when the little party departed. His irritation was not relieved when the young

soldier failed to explain the details of the proposed expedition, but apparently the leader's thoughts were on other matters, for he gave slight heed to the jealousy of the lanky soldier by his side.

Steadily the band held to its way until the road through the woods had been passed and then the four mounted men entered a low valley. A swift little stream flowed through the centre, and at the leader's suggestion all four stopped to permit their horses to drink. The sun had dropped behind the hills and the shadows of evening were rapidly lengthening. The place was wild, and the approaching shadows served to deepen the gloom which somehow had settled upon the little party.

"There's somebody coming," said Job suddenly, as he glanced at the place behind them where the rough roadway was lost in the woods.

Instantly all four men looked toward the place, from which came several mounted men.

"Look there!" exclaimed John excitedly in a low voice. "Do you see that? It's a girl or a woman leading the men! There are a dozen of them at least. Come on! We ought to get away from here right smart!"

CHAPTER XXII

A CAROLINA TARTAR

THE startled man gazed for a moment at the approaching band and at the girl who was riding in advance. The number of men was not so great as John at first had thought, and it speedily became manifest that there were not more than five besides the strange leader.

"They are our friends," said Solomon hurriedly. "We'd make a mistake to leave without a word."

"I don't think so," said the young soldier positively. "We ought not to take any chances at all. I'm for going on before we have trouble."

"I'm not," retorted Solomon, "and furthermore I'm not going."

"Then I shall go alone."

"Go on, then," sneered Solomon. "If a man is afraid this is no place for him, not even if he meets his own friends."

The young soldier's face flushed at the words, but as he peered at John and Job he

did not speak. It was plain that they were inclined to side with the lanky horseman. A glance at the approaching men showed that now they had all emerged from the woods and that there were only five men in the group. A personal encounter might not be threatened in view of the numbers, but the young soldier was thinking of the strict orders he had received. The interception of Rawdon's messenger might mean a decision as to the fate of Fort Ninety-Six, as well as a solution of General Greene's plans. It was true he would be alone if he should leave his comrades, but the boyish soldier was thinking chiefly of his orders. To them he must be true whatever might befall, and instantly he decided to depart. The risk of meeting strangers was too great to be long considered.

Without a word the young horseman turned and started swiftly down the road without once glancing behind him. The thought that Solomon doubtless was placing a false interpretation upon his abrupt departure was not soothing to his feelings, nor did he know how John wheeled and was about to follow, when the tall soldier placed his hand on the bridle of the horse upon which his comrade was mounted and savagely said, "Don't be a

fool, John ! There 's no danger ! You need n't be afraid." The taunt had the desired effect, and John and Job both remained with Solomon who was strangely determined to await the coming of the band of approaching men.

Meanwhile the young soldier sped swiftly down the road in the deepening dusk. He was angry at Solomon and in his thoughts was blaming both John and Job for not following. The confusion in his mind was increased when the thought occurred to him that, perhaps, after all, he might be acting upon a false sense of duty. Solomon was familiar with the region and knew many of the people that dwelt in it. It was possible too that he had recognized some of the men who had been seen. To divide their own force was assuredly unwise. Perhaps his real feeling had been anger at the flippant manner in which the jealous soldier had treated the suggestions of his young leader.

At the thought the young soldier drew rein on his horse and turning about in his saddle listened intently. What was that ? The silence of the evening was broken by what seemed to the intent listener to be one sharp and prolonged cry that came from the woods through which he had passed. Was it a call

for help? Trembling, the young soldier listened for the repetition of the cry or for the report of guns. Neither sound was heard, however, and unable to endure the suspense longer he started swiftly back in the direction from which he had come. He had not gone far before he beheld the form of a horseman slowly approaching. A moment later he was aware that the unknown rider was a girl or woman, and instantly he concluded that she must be the one whom he had seen a little while before at the head of the advancing party from which he had fled.

But where were her recent companions? Why was she alone? What had become of his own friends? The questions were troublesome and he decided to obtain an answer if possible, as he increased the speed of his horse and drew near the girl who, apparently, was not alarmed by the discovery of the lone horseman, for she still pressed steadily forward. Abruptly halting as he drew near, the young soldier smiled as he saw a huge pistol held in one hand of the girl and resting upon the pommel of her saddle. That she was only a girl was manifest even in the dim light. At the utmost she was not more than seventeen years of age.

"Where are the men who were with you?" the young soldier abruptly inquired.

"Which men do you mean?"

"The five you were leading."

"I was n't leading any one."

"There were five with you."

"Were there?"

"Yes, and you met three others right back here."

"Did I?" The girl's manner was provoking, almost taunting in her apparent fearlessness. Who she was or why she was riding alone in the approaching night the young soldier was unable to understand.

"Where are the three men now?" he demanded.

"How should I know?"

"Where are they?" he repeated angrily.

"They're where they won't make any more trouble," she said quietly.

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say."

"Has anything happened to them?"

"If you call falling into the hands of Lonesome Dick Davis and his band anything, then I think something has happened to them," she replied tauntingly.

"Who is Lonesome Dick Davis?"

"Don't yo' all know?" she exclaimed in genuine surprise.

"I never heard of him."

"Where have yo' all been?"

"Tell me where my — the three men are."

"Do you all really want toe know? Then I'll take you where they are." As she spoke the girl turned her horse about in the road, but her grasp of the weapon before her was not relaxed.

"Tell me where they are and then I'll say whether or not I want to go where they are."

"They are over yonder," she said, as she indicated the road before them.

"Where?"

"If yo' all must know they're with Lonesome Dick."

"Prisoners?"

"One of 'em is n't."

"Why?"

"Because he's dead, that's all."

"What?"

"The pore fool would n't do what he was told fo' toe do."

"Which one?"

"Not knowin' any o' 'em, I cain't tell yo'."

"Where are the other two?"

"I done tole yo'. They 're with Lonesome Dick."

"Who is he?"

"He's my father."

"Is he a tory?"

"Is he a *what*?"

"A tory."

"He's a friend o' King George, if that's what yo' all mean. He came down from the mountains, where he and I have lived ever since my mother died. He heard the call and came."

"And brought you with him?"

"I reck'n he did. He has a fetchin' way with him, so that when he hints that he wants a man fo' toe come, he mos' gen'rally does. Bein' his own daughter I could n't jest say 'no,' nohow."

"Where are you going now?"

"I'll tell yo', stranger," the girl said, as she suddenly raised the huge pistol. "I'm a-goin' fo' toe take yo' all straight back to Lonesome Dick. He's jes' a-lookin' fo' men like yo' all. You go ahead an' I'll follow, an' if yo' so much as lift yo' little fingah I'll shoot yo' full o' lead."

There was no question in the young soldier's mind that the girl would be as good as her

word. Apparently she was without fear. Foolishly he had placed himself in her power, and he was convinced that the slightest suspicious action on his part would cause her to carry out her threat. Without a word he did as he was bidden. In silence the two started down the road, the young soldier ahead and the girl riding close behind him.

For a time they both rode forward, and neither spoke. The young soldier's thoughts were bitter as he realized more fully the humiliating position in which he found himself. To be made a prisoner in itself was hard, when he thought of the purpose with which he and his companions had been dispatched from Colonel Lee's camp, but to be taken by a girl and without even an opportunity to attempt to free himself was worst of all. The word of the girl, too, that one of his recent companions was dead was also distressing, especially so since he had no reason to doubt that she had spoken truly. Unable to see behind him, yet assured that his captor was prepared to fire at the first evidence of any attempt on his part to break away, his plight became still more unbearable as he proceeded on his way. There were moments when he was tempted to draw his own weapons or leap to the ground or sud-

denly swerve from his course; but more sober reflection caused him every time to abandon such a project as being too perilous to warrant even the attempt. He must keep on his way, he assured himself, and simply be watchful before he should meet Lonesome Dick Davis, who doubtless was all that his daring daughter proclaimed him to be. The young soldier's experience had already taught him that the Carolinas abounded in bands not unlike that of which the tory Davis was reported by his daughter to be the leader. He was aware that the forces which Sumter and Marion led were, to an extent, matched by their enemies. The partisan warfare was largely maintained by partisan leaders, to whose daring deeds the commanders were indebted for many of the successes of either side. That Davis, of whom the young soldier had never heard, was doubtless a trusted leader of one of the minor bands of tories, he had now no question. His title of "Lonesome Dick" too was in keeping with those which the Swamp Fox and the Game Cock had received from their enemies. Whether the man was known as "Lonesome" because of his life among the mountains, or was so called because of the character of his labors, he could only conjecture.

"I was a-reckonin' thet you all might be the man my dad sent me fo' toe meet," suggested the girl, much as if she did not find anything remarkable in the position she and her captive now occupied.

Startled by her unexpected words the young soldier did not look behind him, aware as he was that she still was keenly watching his every movement.

"If I had been," he suggested, striving to speak lightly, "I should be riding beside you, not ahead of you as I now am."

"Maybe; though I find some o' Lord Rawdon's men are not the kind I want near me."

"Were you looking for one of Rawdon's men?" asked the young soldier quickly, a new and somewhat startling suggestion arising in his mind at the words of the girl.

"I was that. That's why pap told me toe ride ahead an' meet him. I reck'n he'll be jest as happy when he finds I'm a-bringin' him one o' Greene's men that got away."

"I reckon he will, though I don't amount to much."

"I reck'n that's so."

"Don't you think you'd better go back and wait for Rawdon's courier?"

"I'm thinkin' Lord Rawdon's courier don't

need me as much as yo' all. I kin get toe him after I've toted yo' all back to pap."

There was no question then, the young soldier assured himself, that the courier of the British colonel, the very man whom he himself had been sent to secure, was expected soon in the vicinity. Perhaps the band of Davis had been sent to escort and protect him from attacks by the troublesome patriots of the legion. The thought that the man was so near and yet that he himself was powerless to prevent him from carrying his message to the near-by fort, was maddening. He was on the point of chancing the shot of the girl. He must not weakly submit without making at least one attempt to escape when so much depended upon his efforts. What he could do alone was of course uncertain, but at least he could attempt something.

His purpose, however, was suddenly thwarted as the girl behind him exclaimed, "Here we are! Here's pap and his men!"

CHAPTER XXIII

A PERSONAL ENCOUNTER

THE light was still sufficiently strong to enable the young soldier to see the men before him as well as to reveal the place to which he and the girl had come as the one where he had left his recent companions. The girl's father plainly was a typical mountaineer, solemn-visaged, moody, strong, and one who was almost fanatical in his zeal. His companions too were all of a similar type, and, as he found himself in their midst, the young soldier instantly was aware that he had permitted himself to be led into a situation as difficult as any he had ever faced. He was, however, unable to obtain any glimpse of the three men who had accompanied him when he set forth from the camp of General Greene. The information the girl had given him, that one of the men had been severely dealt with, increased his feeling of anxiety. His own safety as well as the success of his venture were alike in peril.

Striving to appear calm as he realized that

much depended upon his manner, the young soldier faced the leader who now approached him.

"Who is this man, Kate?" the solemn leader inquired of the girl. His voice was deep and reminded his hearer of the rumbling of distant thunder.

"He's one of Greene's men, pap," replied the girl. "He belongs to the men you got here a little while ago."

"Is that true?" the giant demanded as he turned to the young soldier.

"It is. Where are my friends?" replied the prisoner.

"You never will see them again in this world," said the man solemnly.

"Oh, yes, I shall."

"Never."

"Then it's because you have killed them. If you have —"

"Save your threats!"

"I'm not threatening. I'm telling you what you may know already that Light Horse Harry's legion —"

"What of the legion?" demanded the man as the young soldier hesitated.

"Nothing, except that it isn't very far away."

The men with the leader plainly were uneasy, for they glanced quickly behind them up the long road that was lost in the woods.

"Light Horse Harry is not one whom I fear."

"You would if you knew him better. He never forgets a friend, and if you have ill-treated one of his men he and his legion will get you, just as sure as you are mounted on that horse."

"Your idle boastings—"

"They are *not* idle boastings!" broke in the young soldier. "I am telling you the truth. Even now some of his men may be watching us from the woods yonder."

The giant did not even glance in the direction indicated, but his men were plainly disturbed and looked apprehensively toward the towering trees. Seeing his advantage, the young soldier said quickly, "You know Light Horse Harry Lee too well to believe that what I say is not the truth."

"Henry Lee is a son of perdition! He's a rebel like Absalom! He is a traitor to his king! He shall have the seven vials of wrath poured on his shameless head! He is a son of Beelzebub, his father!" The rumbling tones of the giant were more indicative of

sorrow than of anger and the young soldier stared at the man in amazement, wondering if he was dealing with a lunatic or a fanatic.

"Come, pap," suggested the girl, "you must put this man where—"

"He must go to his own company, like Judas."

"Yes, yes. I know. But while we're waiting, Light Horse Harry may come and—"

"There he comes now!" suddenly shouted one of the band.

Instantly the eyes of all were turned again to the place where the road disappeared in the woods. A man riding swiftly, followed by others, could be seen. Apparently unmindful of the young soldier, every man in the band abruptly wheeled and started swiftly to the shelter of the bank, on the opposite side of the brook,—that is, all except the solemn giant and the young soldier. Without a word the latter turned and sped down the road, though an instant later he was aware that the giant was in swift pursuit.

The flight had lasted only a few minutes before the young soldier saw that his pursuer was better mounted than he and was rapidly gaining upon him. Still the fugitive urged his horse forward, though he was fearful every

moment that his huge pursuer would fire upon him. Apparently the fanatical man was confident that his horse would do more for him than would his rifle, and as the race continued his confidence appeared to be well placed. Steadily and surely the distance between the two men became less, and in a brief time the horses were almost neck and neck. The two men now, however, were so far from the place where the race had begun that the young soldier was confident that aid would not come from that quarter. He had been rapidly thinking over different plans, and already he was prepared to act. Freeing his feet from his stirrups he suddenly reached out his hand, and grasping the bridle of the horse beside him, flung himself bodily against the body of its rider. With a crash both men fell to the ground, as the horse stumbled at the sudden addition to his load.

The young soldier was aware, as he and the man struck the ground together, that his left arm had been badly wrenched. The pain for a moment was blinding and the arm seemed to be helpless. His contestant, too, was partly stunned by the fall and seemed to be motionless. When the young soldier, however, tried to rise he suddenly was seized and held to the ground by the hands of his powerful foe.

The contest that followed was long and desperate. Again and again the young soldier strove to make use of tricks in twisting the body of the man, — tricks that never had failed him in his wrestling matches in the camp. But all seemed to be alike useless. The giant's grip was unbroken and his fury such as his rival had never known. One of the horses had not fled, and stood whinnying close by as if he was sympathizing with his master. In the dim light it almost seemed as if there were not two, but a half-dozen men engaged in the deadly combat. When John Adams had been eloquently pleading with the Congress to declare the colonies independent of the mother country, he had not had such a vision before him as that of the struggle which was going on between these two men. At last the young soldier realized that the numbness in his arm seemed to be creeping over his entire body. Flames seemed to be darting before his eyes, and the roaring in his ears was like the continuous fall of a mighty body of water. He was aware that if he did not win now his defeat was certain.

Twisting to one side until he could feel the tense muscles of the man in whose embrace he was locked, he suddenly reversed his action and threw the body of his contestant

to the opposite side. To the surprise of the young soldier he found the power of the giant to resist apparently gone. The limit of the man's strength and endurance had come.

Instantly the young soldier exerted himself as he had not done before, and so slight was the resistance that the body of the giant was flung free from him and fell to one side. The man did not even attempt to rise or to resume his former position.

Scarcely realizing that success had been won, trembling in every limb, breathing with great difficulty, scarcely able to see about him, still the young soldier somehow managed to regain an upright position. Before him, lying helpless and exhausted on the ground, was the body of the huge mountaineer.

There were too many reasons why the young soldier should be gone, to permit of delay even to secure his prisoner who was now incapable of resistance. Kneeling beside the prostrate body, the young soldier quickly thrust his hand into the man's pockets and from one drew out a paper which he hastily secured. Then convinced that the man was alive and would soon recover, he arose and turned to the one horse which had remained near the scene of the conflict. It was not his horse the young



DREW OUT A PAPER WHICH HE HASTILY SECURED

soldier speedily discovered, nor was any other near.

Leading the horse by the bridle, he retraced his way to the spot where the helpless man was lying, secured the huge pistol and the flask of powder as well as the bullet-pouch of his enemy, and then turning once more into the road, crawled painfully and slowly into the saddle, and turning the horse in the direction in which he had previously been going, he started once more down the road.

How the long night passed, whether or not he was in peril, what he saw, or even how he contrived to maintain his seat, were all unknown to the young soldier. His injured arm was hanging helpless and his horse was left free to follow its own instincts.

At last, when the dawn appeared, he was aware that he was near a long lane that led far back from the winding road to a rambling house he saw among trees in the distance. He could go no further, and whether the house was the abode of friend or foe mattered little. Help he must have, and without fully realizing just what he was doing, he guided his horse into the lane and started toward the house in the distance.

When he came near the long piazza which

was in the front of the house, he was aware that three women were standing together there, awaiting his coming, and staring at him with alarm and anxiety expressed on every face. He was dimly aware that one of the women was older than the other two, who were little more than girls.

"Did you bring word from Benjamin?" demanded one of the younger women, as she darted toward the approaching stranger.

Before the young soldier could reply to the question the older woman said hastily, "Have you come from the boys?"

"Don't you see the man is wounded?" said the younger girl in a low voice to her companions. "Look at his face! His left arm is helpless! Be quick or he will fall from his horse!"

The warning was needed, for the swaying young rider was on the point of falling. The trees and the great house were whirling before him, and the pain in his useless arm had suddenly become almost unbearable. Before he could speak, however, he was assisted from the back of the horse by the women, two of whom helped him into the house while the third led his horse to the barn in the rear. In a brief time he was lying upon a couch and

his desperate needs were being attended to by his willing helpers. The young soldier, vaguely wondering why no man was there, and puzzled to account for his welcome, was still too nearly exhausted to make inquiries. Indeed, soon after he had been fed and his injured arm had been bathed and bandaged, he fell into a troubled sleep, from which he did not awake until an hour had elapsed.

When he opened his eyes he beheld his three new friends standing beside his couch, and the oldest was gazing at him with such an expression of sympathy and interest in her face that he was comforted at once.

"Thank you," he said quietly. Then attempting to arise he fell back with a groan, as he said, "I must be on my way. Where is my horse?"

"He is safe and we are taking good care of him," said one of the girls.

"You must not think of even trying to leave now," added the older woman. "Tell us, do you know anything about our boys?"

"Why, mother, he does n't even know who they are," suggested one of the girls, smiling as she spoke.

"But you are one of General Greene's men, are n't you? You have come from his

camp, haven't you?" inquired the mother anxiously.

There was no resisting the appeal of her sympathy, and, realizing that he was in the house of his friends, the young soldier smiled and nodded his head.

"Then you must have seen my boys!" exclaimed the mother. "There's Barclay and William, Silas and Matthew, James and Stephen. They are all with Greene. My youngest boy, my baby John, was shot. He was with Colonel Lee — Light Horse Harry he is called — in the attack on Georgia."

"I knew him," replied the young soldier. "John Martin —"

"That's his name! Oh, I am glad you are here. And you, poor boy, are hurt too. We'll help you for Johnnie's sake — as well as for your own." The woman's eyes were filled with tears, but the smile on her face was one that the suffering young soldier never forgot. "Yes," she continued, "all my boys are with Greene, and if I had six more I'd want every one of them to be with him, too. Barclay is Sarah's husband. She stays with my daughter and me while he is in the army."

"I must go," said the young soldier hastily, as once more he tried to rise.

“Not yet.”

“But I must! There’s a messenger coming from Lord Rawdon to Ninety-Six! He’ll pass this very place! And I was sent to get him or his letter, or both. I must go.”

“Not quite yet. You must rest first,” said Mrs. Martin soothingly. And under her gentle spell the young soldier fell back and soon was again sleeping.

When he awoke he was startled when he saw that the sun was setting. He had slept all through the entire day. He was still more startled, however, when Sarah approached the couch and, holding forth a letter, said simply, “There’s the courier’s letter — the one you came to get.”

CHAPTER XXIV

A MASKED BATTERY

ROUSING himself the young soldier sat erect on the couch, and staring at Sarah Martin he exclaimed, "The courier's letter! How do you know? How did you get it? I don't understand."

"That's the letter," replied the young woman quietly.

"How did you get it?"

"Martha and I took it."

"From the courier?"

"Yes."

"Has he been here?"

"No."

"Then I don't see —"

"Martha will tell you."

Turning to the girl by Sarah's side, the young soldier peered keenly at her before he spoke. She was apparently not more than seventeen or eighteen years of age, somewhat slight in her figure, and modest, almost timid, in her bearing. Was it possible that she and her sister-in-law had really succeeded in ob-

taining that which already had almost cost him his life, as well as the life of one of his comrades, if the daughter of Lonesome Dick had spoken truly? The young soldier's expression of amazement was so genuine that the girl laughed as she said simply, "Yes, sir, Sarah has told you the truth, though I hope I shall never go through such an experience again."

"Did you two girls take the letter from Rawdon's courier?"

"That is exactly what we did. You can see for yourself that the letter is directed to Colonel Cruger, the commander of Fort Ninety-Six."

"Yes, I see it is," replied the young soldier, as he glanced again at the letter which he now held in his hand. "Tell me how you got it. I don't understand," he said simply.

"It was Sarah's doing. She is the one to tell you."

"Tell him what we did, Martha," said the young wife of Barclay Martin.

"Why, when we saw how badly you had been hurt," began Martha, "and how anxious you were to get the courier's letter, Sarah called me out to the piazza and said to me, 'Martha, you and I must get the letter away from that courier.'"

"Yes, yes, what did you do then?"

"Why, I told Sarah we couldn't do it. What were two girls able to do with the man Lord Rawdon would be likely to give that important letter to? But Sarah wouldn't listen to me. I'm afraid she likes to have her own way," laughed the girl. "Well, when I asked her how she proposed to get it, she said that the messenger was due to pass here about four o'clock to-day —"

"How did you know that?" broke in the young soldier. "I didn't know it myself, so I don't see how you found that out."

"Why, it was in the letter you had," explained Sarah.

"What letter?"

"The one in your coat pocket. I know it wasn't just the proper thing to do, but after we decided to try to stop the courier we thought you must have some directions about where and when he would be found, so we took that letter from your pocket. You were sleeping so hard you didn't wake up. We know it was not the proper thing to search your coat, as I said, but we could not get you to wake up, so we took the liberty of making a search for ourselves. I don't think we ever should have succeeded if it had not been for

the letter you had. We humbly apologize for reading it, but now that we have succeeded in getting the courier's letter for you I am sure you will forgive us for the liberty we took."

"Why, of course I will. But I don't understand. What was the letter? I didn't have any. Let me see it."

Laughingly Sarah arose, and from the shelf above the stone fireplace took a badly soiled and crumpled piece of paper which she handed the young soldier. Taking it he opened and read the brief note. "Meet the courier at four of the clock to-morrow afternoon at the bend in the road near the house of the Widow Martin." Neither date nor signature was given, and for a moment the mystery of the strange note was still deeper. Suddenly the young soldier looked up and said, "Ah, yes. I know now. I found that in the jacket of Lonesome Dick after our meeting yesterday afternoon. That explains it. It was not my letter at all, but his, and you will make your apologies to him."

"Lonesome Dick!" exclaimed Sarah. "Have you had anything to do with him?"

"I have, to my sorrow. He's the man who put me in the plight I was in when I came here last night."

"He's the most dangerous man in the Carolinas," said Sarah with a shudder.

"Have you ever seen him? Do you know him?"

"He came here this week and stripped the plantation of almost everything of any value. He's a fanatic! He's crazy! He thinks he's the Lord's Anointed, and he does everything in that light. He is certain he is divinely appointed to rid the Carolinas of every man that opposes King George."

"Did he harm any of you?"

"No, that much can be said for him that he never mistreats the women or children of the colonies. But the men are all, in his mind, leagued with the forces of evil, and 'evil' to him means rebellion against King George. He's so huge and wild and so conscientious, too, in his awful ways that he frightens one just to look at him. You were fortunate to escape with your life."

"I have no complaint to make," said the young soldier quietly.

"Tell us," said Martha, "where you saw him. What was he doing when you left him?"

"He was n't doing anything—except just breathing. I made sure of that because I put

my hand over his heart when I took that letter out of his pocket."

"Do you mean he could n't do anything?"

"That appeared to be the condition."

"Do you mean to say you met him face to face?"

"That is my recollection."

"And got away alive?"

"I am alive. Go on and tell me how you made Rawdon's courier give up his letter."

"But," protested Martha, "do you mean to tell us that you had a hand-to-hand encounter with Lonesome Dick and left him almost dead? Is that what you mean?"

"He was n't dead, but he was n't very lively."

"I never heard of such a thing! It is said that he is a match for any four men in the colony."

"Please tell me how you got that courier's letter."

"Well, Sarah came to me, as I told you, and said that she and I must stop Lord Rawdon's courier and get the letter away from him. Of course I told her we could n't do anything of the kind, and after she had explained her plan I was twice as certain as I was before."

"What was the plan?"

"Why, she suggested that she and I should dress up in Barclay's and Stephen's clothes, take guns, and go down to the place where Lonesome Dick had been told to meet the courier."

"And that is what you did?" demanded the young soldier excitedly.

"Why, yes, I reckon so," said Martha smilingly. "At any rate we put on the boys' clothes, found one good musket, and one that would n't go off, and then we started across lots for that place where the road bends."

"Go on! Go on!"

"Well, when we got there we looked up and down the road, but not a sign of Lord Rawdon's courier could we see. I was trembling like a leaf, but Sarah—you should just have seen her! She was as quiet and as bold as a lion."

"I have never heard that lions were very quiet," laughed Sarah.

"'Bold' is what I said," retorted Martha. "When we had been there a half hour General Sarah changed her plan of campaign. She ordered all her troops into the bushes beside the road. I was the 'troops,' and I reckon no army ever obeyed its general's or-

ders more gladly than I did when I hid there in the bushes. But Sarah was n't satisfied yet. She took both the muskets — one of them you could n't fire if your life depended upon it — and pushed them through the bushes so that the barrels pointed right out into the road. Then she broke off some dead branches from the trees and stuck them through the bushes in a row on each side of the road. There were a dozen or fifteen of these dead branches, and they really did look as if they might be guns. If the light was not too strong and a man just glanced at them, why, he might very easily have believed that a good-sized band of men was hidden behind the bushes and that every one had his gun aimed at some one in the road itself."

"Did the courier come?" inquired the young soldier, now deeply interested.

"After a while he did, but not till I had almost made up my mind that he was n't coming at all."

"Was he alone?"

"No, there was a redcoat officer of some kind on each side of him."

"Then there were three altogether?"

"Yes, sir."

"All three mounted?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did you do?"

"What did I do? I didn't do much except try to keep my teeth from chattering. I wanted to scream! I never was so frightened in all my life as I was when those three men stopped there in the road, right in front of the bushes behind which I was hiding."

"Where was Sarah all this time? Was she hiding too?"

"No, indeed, she wasn't! She had the one gun which could be fired, and when she saw the three men coming she just stepped right out into the road, and faced them — as bold as a lion."

"As bold as a mouse, you mean, Martha," suggested Sarah. "It seemed to me for a minute that I could not stand up, and my lips were trembling so that I could hardly speak."

"Well, you did make yourself heard, for I was there and know all about it," retorted Martha. "She stood there in the middle of the road, and waved her arm, and called upon the three men to halt."

"Did they stop?" asked the excited listener.

"They did — all three of them."

"What did they say?"

"One of the men — an officer of some kind

—looked down from his horse at Sarah, and said, ‘What do you want, my lad?’ You see he took Sarah for a boy, and really I can’t blame him, for she did look like a boy about fifteen years old.”

“What did she say then?”

“Quick as a flash she raised her gun to her shoulder, and called out, ‘Don’t one of you move! I have my men lined up along the road, and if one of you tries to draw, I’ll order them to fire on you instantly. You hear me, don’t you?’ she went on, as she turned for an instant, and looked at the place where I was hiding. I reckon my voice was shaky, at least I knew I was shaking all over, — but somehow, though I can’t understand it even yet, I managed to call out, ‘We hear you, all right. We’ll drop every one, if one of them moves!’ If I had n’t been so scared I’m sure I should have laughed out loud when I saw the faces of those redcoats. One of them started to draw his sword, and began, ‘You young rascal!’ but just then he glanced in the direction from which my voice had come. You ought to have seen him! It wasn’t very light, but I could see his face go white when he saw all those ‘guns’ sticking out of the bushes. Of course he couldn’t tell the difference between a dead

branch and a real musket, they looked so much alike. But he was sure all three men were caught, and it would be sure death to move. He put up his sword, and I heard him mutter, 'Trapped by a parcel of brats!'"

"How did you get the letter?"

"Sarah got it. She spoke up and said, 'Now there is n't any use in making a fuss. We want that letter. Hand it to me and we'll let you go. If you don't, then my men will fire. You hear me, sergeant?' she added, speaking to me, of course. The men looked at the 'guns' a minute and then one of them drew out a letter and threw it into the road at Sarah's feet. 'Wait a minute,' she said, as she picked it up. As soon as she saw the directions on it she said, just as quietly as you please, to the men, 'Now about face, every one of you, and don't you dare look back before you have met Rawdon's men!'"

"And they went?"

"They went," laughed Martha.

"It was a daring—" began the young soldier, but he stopped abruptly when from the piazza there came a demand for the door to be opened. The voice of the speaker was deep and strong, and every one in the room knew at once who the unexpected visitor was.

CHAPTER XXV

A SEARCH

“It’s Lonesome Dick!” exclaimed Martha, terror-stricken at the coming of the man who was feared more than even the British colonel.

“What shall we do?” inquired Mother Martin, her face becoming colorless as she spoke. “What shall we do?” she tremblingly repeated, as the knocking on the door was redoubled and the loud voice of the man demanded entrance.

“Come! You come with me!” exclaimed Sarah to the young soldier. Then turning to the women she said in a low voice, “You two must hold Dick here. Don’t let him or any of his men come up the stairs. Keep them back as long as you can. If he is alone—” Sarah stopped abruptly as the door was shaken until it seemed as if it must give way under the onslaught.

Silently she sped from the room and the young soldier instantly followed her. As they stepped into the wide hall and started toward the stairway in the rear, a fresh demand came from the party outside.

“Open this door! Open it, or we shall break it down!” The deep voice of the speaker outside the door sounded like the call of doom. Resistance would not be possible, and as Sarah and her companion gained the top of the stairs, she beckoned to her mother to comply with the demand of the fanatic. Darting into a large bedroom she thrust the young soldier before her as she opened the door into a long dark clothespress. From pegs on the wall many garments were hanging which the young woman thrust aside as she pushed the excited young soldier into the farthest corner, leaving him crouching against the wall and covered by the garments that were hanging there. Just as she returned to the room she heard the front door opened in the room below and was aware that the men who had demanded admittance, were entering. Rushing to the top of the stairway she peered over the banisters and in the dim light recognized Lonesome Dick and six of his companions in the hall.

“We have come for the rebel,” explained the leader in his deepest tones.

“Which rebel?” demanded Mother Martin. “You know we are all rebels in this house. If you mean my boys you will have to go to the camp of General Greene to find them. If

you are attacking defenseless women, which seems to be the chief occupation of you tories, then we are at your mercy."

"Your rebel son John is not with Greene," said the leader solemnly. "He has gone to meet the reward of a traitor."

"He was not a traitor to his neighbors or his country. He never lent a hand in terrifying the helpless or robbing the women of the Carolinas."

"He has gone to his reward," repeated Dick still more solemnly.

"I would rather see every one of my boys go as poor John went than see one of them attacking unprotected women or engaged in robbing his neighbors!"

Sarah, breathing heavily, fancied she could almost see the flash in her mother's eyes when she heard her fearless reply to the tory's demands.

"John has gone," continued the leader as if he was speaking to himself. "Barclay and Stephen and all the others will soon follow him. Verily they shall have their reward. But we have come to take a young rebel who fled here for shelter last night."

"Then you should have come when he did. Why did n't you come last evening?"

"I could not."

"Yes, I know. You had an encounter with him. You ought to remember him with gratitude as long as you shall live, Lonesome Dick."

"'Gratitude'!" roared the leader. "'Gratitude'! Woman, you don't know what you are talking about! His fate shall be Haman's! Where is he? Where is he?"

The listening Sarah's trembling increased as she heard the exclamations of the enraged tory. She was fearful for her mother's safety also, knowing as she did the fanaticism of the powerful man.

"You ought to be grateful to him as long as you live, Lonesome Dick," repeated Mother Martin. "You were helpless when he left you. He might easily have made an end of you right then and there. But he spared your life—"

"Woman, enough of this!" broke in the leader in a voice that was terrible in the man's towering rage. "Tell us where you have hidden him! Give him up to us if you wish to spare your own flesh and blood!"

"I told you that you ought to have come last night if you wanted to take him."

"Has he gone?"

"You can see for yourself," replied Mother

Martin, as she glanced at the room in which the young soldier had been lying.

"He *was* here."

"That is true."

"When did he go?"

"I cannot tell you exactly."

"He's here now, Dick," said one of the tory's followers. "He was seen to come in here, and he was n't seen to leave. Search the house!"

"That is what we will do," thundered Dick. Instantly turning to his band he said, "Tom, you keep watch in front of the house, and Sandy, you go to the rear. If either of you sees the rebel trying to get away, shoot him as you would a rabbit. The other five of us will keep together and will search the place from cellar to garret."

"Better divide us into two parts, Dick, and let some of us begin in the cellar and the others start with the garret," one of the band suggested. "We can come together here in the hall and between us we'll be sure to trap him."

"We'll keep together," said the leader.

"We all know why," said Mother Martin boldly.

"Why?" thundered Dick, turning sharply to her.

"You yourself can best explain that to your men," she replied. "Or if you really prefer to have me explain, then I'll do so."

"Get to work, men! Come on!" growled the tory, as he instantly turned to the cellar-way. His men quickly followed, and the search was begun as soon as the two guards had taken the places assigned them in the front and rear of the house.

It was not long before the searchers returned to the hall, and their failure to discover the hiding-place of the man for whom they were searching was at once manifest.

"You should have come last night when he was here," suggested Mother Martin calmly. Ignoring her words, the band steadily continued its labors. Ascending the stairs, the men at once went to the attic, where every conceivable place of concealment was thoroughly searched. The work here having been done, and their efforts proving to be unavailing, the tories at last began to search the floor where the bedrooms were located. One after another was entered, doors were opened, presses were ransacked, and still the man for whom the band was searching was not found. Exasperated, angry, and almost despairing of success, the men at last entered the room in

which Sarah was seated beside a low table where a candle was burning. In her hands was the sampler on which, to all appearances, she was busily engaged.

"You are a cool one," exclaimed one of the men, as she arose from her seat to face the intruders.

"Why, pray, am I a 'cool one'?" Sarah inquired calmly.

"Never mind that! We must search your room."

"Without my permission?"

The men laughed without replying and at once began their task. Even the drawers of the huge "high boy" were opened in their efforts to discover the hiding-place of the man whom they were seeking. At last, almost baffled, Lonesome Dick grasped the handle of the door of the clothespress in which the young soldier was standing, crouching against the wall and covered by the garments which were hanging from the row of pegs above him.

"Surely you will not intrude in my own private press," said Sarah with dignity, as she stood and looked straight into the face of the leader. "We have had many bands of tories and other robbers here within the past

few months, but we never yet have had one that did not respect the request of a lady."

The companions of Dick hastily drew back and looked questioningly at their leader. Apparently unmoved by the request, the tory said to the girl, "If you will tell us where the rebel is, we'll trouble you no more."

Sarah, who had overheard the conversation between her mother and the man who now was standing before her, quietly asked, "Which rebel? You know every member of this household is on the side of the colonies. If you are looking for my husband or for any of his brothers I think I can tell you where you might find them. Do you know where General Greene's camp is? If you do, you'll have no difficulty in finding Barclay or Stephen, or —"

"We want the young rebel who came here last evenin'. You know all about it."

"There was a young patriot here last evening, but if you wanted him, you ought to have come then. He had just had a meeting with some one and showed some of the effects of it. But he left the tory who attacked him in a bad plight, I fancy. Did you hear of any one —"

"Search the place!" ordered Lonesome Dick, savagely turning to his men.

"Pray pardon me," said Sarah, instantly stepping in front of the door. "I have already explained to you that this press is filled with my own personal belongings. That explanation, I am sure, will be sufficient for any gentleman. As I said, we have had a good many visitors of late who have stolen our fruit and cattle and even our silver; but never yet has there been one who has insisted upon doing what you suggest."

"Out of the way, woman!" exclaimed the leader, as, placing a powerful hand on her shoulder, he gently pushed Sarah to one side and then bade his men enter and search the place. Two of the Tories at once entered the closet in response to the command and began their investigations. The silence in the room was oppressive. The face of Sarah betrayed no other emotion than that of indignation at the refusal to regard her request. She had seated herself again beside the little table and resumed the task at which she apparently had been busied when the band first entered the room. The leader, ignoring her presence, was intently watching the door of the closet, ready at any moment for the sudden call of his men. The great house was still and Sarah did not even know what her mother and Martha were

doing in the rooms below. She dared not even glance at the door of the clothespress for fear of revealing her excitement, which she was striving to conceal.

"There is n't anybody in here."

Sarah with difficulty repressed the scream that rose to her lips when she looked up and saw the two men coming from the closet door. She peered intently at each, endeavoring to learn if either had really discovered the concealed man. As far as she was able to judge from their appearance, neither had found the hidden young soldier. Had they heeded her request and made only a perfunctory search? Or had they found the man for whom they were searching and were simply withholding their discovery? It was impossible for her at the time to determine. That they had failed, if they had really made a search, seemed improbable.

"He is here and we shall find him!" said the leader solemnly. "We will now go to the barns. He has not left the place, of that I am sure."

In response to the word of the tory the four men, each having secured a light, departed from the house, leaving the guard still watching the front and rear.

When at last she was convinced that the men actually had left the house, Sarah hastened to the closet and, standing in the doorway, whispered, "Come."

"Have they gone?" inquired the young soldier as he withdrew from his hiding-place.

"Hush! Be very quiet!" whispered Sarah. "They have left the house saying they were going to the barns. I suspect they will come back. You must go at once."

"Where? How? There's a guard in front and one in back, too, is n't there?"

"Yes. You must go to the smokehouse — that is nearest. I'll find out when they have finished their search there, and just as soon as they have you must go to it. Stay there till you know the Tories have gone or until I bring you word."

"The guard will see me."

"No. Be very careful. Do just what I tell you. Come! Don't make any noise. Take my hand and I'll lead the way."

Mystified and yet somehow strongly confident that the intrepid wife of Barclay Martin would find a way, the young soldier followed as she led him to the stairway in the rear of the house. An occasional whispered word of direction was given, frequent stops were made to

listen, and at last the pair found themselves at the door in the rear of the house. Peering cautiously out, Sarah could see lights moving about in the barn beyond the smokehouse.

"They must have searched the smokehouse first," she whispered to her companion. "Now I'm going to try to draw this guard around the corner of the house. You must watch, and if I succeed, you must run to that little whitewashed building yonder. That's the smokehouse."

"What shall I do then?"

"Stay there until the Tories leave. I fear they'll come back to the house before they go. If they do, you must somehow get your horse and leave. If you succeed, follow the road to the right until you come to the fork, then take the one to the left until you come to another fork. That will lead you straight to General Greene's camp. If you see Barclay tell him we are all well. Now you must leave this door open a little and watch me. I'm going to speak to the guard, and if I succeed in my plan you must do what I told you. Good-by." Before the young soldier could reply she had opened the door and passed out into the darkness.

CHAPTER XXVI

A PLACE OF SHELTER

PEERING from his hiding-place, the young soldier watched the intrepid wife of Barclay as she approached the guard. The tory at first seemed to protest against what she was saying to him, but a moment later he followed her, as she led the way around the corner of the house. Aware that the time for action had come, the young soldier darted from the door, and, crouching low, sped swiftly in the direction of the smokehouse. The door was ajar and hastily swinging it open he darted within, quickly pulling to the door after him, although he held it in such a manner that he was able to see what was occurring without, as well as to hear the sounds which the searching tories might make.

For a time the silence of the night was unbroken. He could see that the guard whom Sarah had induced to leave his place had now returned. From the actions of the man it was plain that she had given him food, for he soon threw away what might have been

the cores of apples. The young soldier smiled as he thought of Sarah's keen wit, but he soon was giving his entire attention to his own predicament.

Within a few minutes after he had gained his place of concealment, he was startled by the swift approach of two men who evidently belonged to the band of Lonesome Dick. They were approaching from the direction of the barns and manifestly both were in haste.

"Sure there was a man in that closet, Tom?" said one, as they both stopped for a moment in front of the smokehouse.

"Certain, Thaddeus," replied the other. "I stepped on his feet. He was right against the wall and he was all covered up by the clothes."

"Why did n't you say so?"

"Because Dick was n't in any mood to stop. He'd have shot the fellow in a minute. I never saw the man so roused. I reckon he has some special reasons of his own for wanting to get this fellow."

"He'll have him if you get him now."

"Yes, but there'll be a chance to save the fellow's life. I reckon if he's the man that got the letter away from the colonel's courier, he'll be worth more alive than dead."

"You don't know that he is the man."

"No. I don't know, but I'll chance it. Come on. We'll go into the house again and put straight for that room. I reckon we'll find the fellow waiting for us, and if we do, we can get him away before Lonesome can lay his hands on him. Come on."

The two men passed on into the darkness, and though no sounds were heard by the excited young soldier, he saw not long after a light in the room in the corner of the house where he had been hidden by the quick-witted Sarah. In a brief time, however, the light disappeared, and once more darkness and silence rested over the plantation.

The waiting at last became almost unbearable. The men must still be in the barn, the young soldier thought, when an hour or more had elapsed. Several times he was on the point of stealing from the smokehouse and trying to make his way stealthily to the place where he believed his horse to be. He had not known just where the animal had been placed, but his natural conclusion was that it must have been taken to the barn.

Suddenly he heard the sounds of approaching men. As he peered at them he saw that there were four of them and that they were

coming from the direction of the barn. He was startled when he saw that they were leading a horse which, as they came nearer, he recognized as the one which he himself had been riding. Here was a new element of peril, for if he should lose his horse, the possibility of escaping from the place was much less promising.

"Dick," inquired one of the men, "hadn't we better stop and look into this smokehouse? The rebel must be somewhere about the place if this is his horse, and you say you're certain of it."

"No," responded the leader. "We looked here on our way out."

"Just as you say, Dick," said the man lightly as the band did not halt.

"That woman knows where he is," growled the leader.

"Certain."

"How can we make her tell?"

"Set fire to her house if she does n't."

"String her up by her thumbs," suggested another.

The men were soon too far from the smokehouse for the young soldier to be able to hear what was said, but what he had already heard was sufficient to arouse his fears for the safety

of the lonely women who had befriended him. To bring more trouble upon the household was not to be thought of, even if he must draw upon himself the attack of the angry and disappointed men. He waited until the men could no longer be seen and then, cautiously opening the door, he crept forth from his hiding-place. There was no definite plan of action in his mind except that somehow he must shield the three women from the rage of the fanatical tory. How this was to be done he must in a measure leave to circumstances, he concluded.

The stars were shining but the night was dark, he found, as he stealthily made his way toward the lane. By making a *détour* he would avoid the house, but even to succeed would be to leave the household to the tender mercies of the brutal band. Escape he must, for the letter of Colonel Rawdon was in the pocket of his coat. Upon this letter the actions, perhaps the very fate, of Greene's army depended. The dilemma was as distressing as it was perplexing.

Suddenly from within the great house came a sound so startling that for a moment the young soldier stopped and was about to run into the building. There was a rattling and a

clatter that sounded as if an avalanche of some kind had been cast down the stairway. The sound was speedily followed by loud laughter and he instantly concluded that, whatever its cause might be, the safety of the inmates was not threatened, at least for the time. Taking advantage of the noisy shouts, which still continued, mingled with the strange clattering and bumping that plainly came from the hall or stairway, the young soldier ran swiftly around the corner of the house and came directly upon a man who was there holding a horse by its bridle. The horse was his own, the young soldier instantly saw, and without hesitating an instant he ran to the man and said, as he seized the rein and quickly swung himself into the saddle, "Go into the house! Dick wants you."

The unexpected word was so startling that for a moment the man hesitated and was about to obey. The moment of hesitation was sufficient to enable the young soldier to wrench the rein from the hand of the guard, and then a blow caused the frightened animal to leap ahead.

Quickly recovering himself the guard discharged his pistol at the swiftly vanishing horse and rider and shouted, "Dick! Hi!

Hi! The man is here! The rebel has got the horse! Come out! Come out!"

The young soldier, urging his horse to increased speed, grateful to have escaped the bullet which passed dangerously near his head, could hear the redoubled shouts behind him which indicated that the call of the guard to his companions had been heard. Did the men have horses? The question was uppermost in his thoughts now as he turned into the road at the end of the lane. He had not seen any, but his failure to do so did not necessarily mean that the tory band had come unmounted to the widow Martin's plantation.

In a brief time there was no room for doubt, for from behind him came the sounds of swiftly running horses. They were in pursuit and the event would be determined by the endurance of the horses. That the animal he was riding had not been fed was speedily evident to the young soldier. The poor beast was soon in distress, but the importance of the letter he was carrying was too great to afford the rider any opportunity for mercy. On and on fled the pursued and pursuers. As far as he was able to learn by his frequent attempts to listen, the tories were not gaining upon him, though the sounds of their horses' feet could still be dis-

tinctly heard. Doubtless they also were able to hear his own horse's flight, he thought. If that were true, to stop and attempt to find shelter would be impossible at this time. Besides, the young soldier was thinking of the safety of the women he had left. With every mile he drew the men away from the plantation, the safety of the three unprotected women became more possible. Then, too, every added yard brought him and his message nearer the American general. Through the darkness the swift flight and equally swift chase were kept up. At times the young soldier would seem to be gaining upon the Tories, for the sounds of their pursuit would become faint or almost cease to be heard. Then the wearied horse of the fugitive would be given a brief rest, but before an opportunity for any change in plans could be made the returning evidences that the chase was maintained again would be heard, and the flight of necessity was resumed. At other times the Tories apparently were so near that the young soldier believed the end had come, but every time his almost exhausted horse would once more press forward and the dangerous distance would be increased.

Even when the dawn appeared the determined Tories had not been shaken off. The

light increased the danger, as the young soldier well knew, just as he was aware that his horse could not go much farther. Still he did not stop, and the light of the risen sun soon made his way plain. Where he was, or whether or not he had fled in the direction of the camp he was seeking, he could not decide. In his zeal to shake off his pursuers all thoughts of direction had been abandoned.

Suddenly in the clear light of the morning he beheld a low little church before him. Not far from it was a house, and in front of the house, leaning against the fence, was a man, whom by his dress the young soldier took to be a clergyman.

Unable to go farther, his wounded arm now paining him almost as if it were on fire, his horse trembling in every limb and wet with foam, the young soldier suddenly resolved to seek the help of the man before him, although he did not know to which side the stranger's sympathies were given.

His coming plainly interested the minister, the benevolent expression of whose face instantly confirmed the young soldier in his decision. Halting his horse, he said breathlessly, "Can you shelter me? I am being pursued."

The man was instantly interested, and with-

out hesitation he replied, "Yes, come with me." As he spoke, he led the way to the rude barn in the rear of the house. Here he assisted the young soldier to dismount, glancing shrewdly at him as he did so. "Stay here a moment," he said, "I'll take your horse." The animal was then led to some place in the rear of the barn which the young soldier was not able to see. In a brief time the man returned and said, "You will be safer here for a bit than in the house. Wait where you are and I'll go for some help."

As the clergyman advanced from the barn, however, he abruptly returned and hastily said, "Here! Get in here! There's a mounted man coming. Have no fear," he added, "I shall protect you."

As he spoke he opened the door into a small room in which harness was kept, and as soon as the young soldier entered he partly closed the door and turned to face the man who by this time had ridden directly to the open door of the barn.

"Good-morning to you, parson," said the rider.

"Good-morning," replied the man.

"Parson Ellington, have you seen a rebel ride past here this morning?"

"A man came here not long ago, but I did not inquire whether or not he was a rebel."

"Yes, yes. That's the man! We have chased him half the night. Which way did he go?"

"I am sure I cannot say. He was a young man —"

"Yes, yes. Did you ferry him across the creek here?"

"No, sir."

"Good! How far up is the ford?"

"At least four miles."

"Then he'll have to go on to get across the creek and into Greene's camp. He has a letter which he got from a courier of Lord Rawdon, and he must not be allowed to give it to the rebel general. Parson," he added quickly, "have n't you a flat-bottomed boat? Don't you sometimes ferry people across the creek?"

"I do, sir."

"Then take me and my horse across! I can cut off the young rebel the other side of the ford if you'll take me across here. Will you?"

"I shall be pleased to do so," replied the parson. "Come with me!" And Mr. Ellington at once led the way to the little dock he had built on the bank of the creek.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE FEE AND THE FERRY

RELIEVED as he was by the departure of the two men, the young soldier nevertheless withdrew from his hiding-place and watched them as they embarked. The parson had a wide, flat-bottomed boat on which the redcoat and his horse were taken. With a long pole Mr. Ellington then pushed out into midstream and slowly proceeded toward the opposite shore. The current of the muddy stream was scarcely perceptible and in a brief time the flat boat was alongside the little dock. There was a brief delay before the redcoat mounted his horse, but the watching young soldier was unable to ascertain the cause.

Soon after the horseman departed the minister poled his ferry-boat back across the muddy waters and made it fast to the dock on his side of the stream. Leisurely he then returned to the barn and said, as he greeted the young soldier, "You very nearly fell into trouble, my young friend."

"Who was he?"

“He’s a lieutenant under Lord Rawdon. He said that you had a letter which you had taken from one of the colonel’s couriers.”

“Did he?” said the young soldier.

“Yes, but don’t tell me whether it is true or not. I am already accused of leaning too strongly toward the colonies.”

“Aren’t you a friend?”

“Surely, surely. But I am a man of peace. My work is not with the sword but with the voice. I have been the rector of this parish for many years. I read the service just as it is written and pray for King George — because I know he needs our prayers,” Mr. Ellington added, his eyes twinkling as he spoke. “Why, last Sunday I read as usual, ‘may it please Thee to bless his gracious majesty, King George III.’” As the young soldier did not reply nor was he able entirely to conceal his indignation at the words, the rector continued quizzically, “I do not think you need be worried over the effect of the prayer. When I read the petition I waited for the response, ‘Hear us, O Lord,’ but for some reason it was not given. There was a silence in the church that could almost be felt until some one over in a corner called out in a sepulchral tone, ‘Good Lord, deliver us.’ Somehow I fancy he ex-

pressed the real sentiments of the assembly," added the minister, laughing. "But my occupation is not one of blood. I am a man of peace."

"If a man is n't for the colonies he is against them."

"Yes, that is true."

"And you are not for them?"

"I am *not* against them. You must reason from that where I stand. I think I am able to do more by not taking an active part than I could were I to shoulder a gun. You need have no fear, young man, while you are my guest, that redcoats or tories will get you. I don't want you to tell me very much about yourself, because then I shall not be able to answer any troublesome questions the young officer may ask me when he comes back."

"Is he coming back?" said the young soldier quickly.

"So he implied, though he complained bitterly of the fee he gave me. I charge every man whom I carry across Goose Creek a shilling and use the money for the poor of my parish. And he complained! He said it was the shortest ride for the biggest fee he had ever had."

"Who is he?" again inquired the young soldier.

"He is a lieutenant under Lord Rawdon, as I told you. According to his story the band of Lonesome Dick, a wild fanatical fellow from the hills, has been chasing you for hours. The lieutenant and the men who were with him have scattered and joined in the pursuit, but thus far they do not seem to have taken you."

"Where was he going?"

"Up to the ford to cut you off from getting into Greene's camp after you yourself had crossed the upper ford."

"I did not even know there is a ford."

"That is quite credible."

"How far from here is General Greene's camp?"

"About ten miles."

"Is that all! Then I must start at once."

"Indeed, you are not to do anything of the kind! Even if I were on the side opposed to you I have strict orders to look out for you."

"'Orders'! Orders from whom?" demanded the young soldier hastily.

"If my enemy is an hungry I am ordered to feed him, if he is thirsty to give him drink," said Mr. Ellington, smiling as he spoke. "And now, young man, before I take you into the house I must have a look at that left arm of

yours. I have noticed that it is in trouble, and though I have but little knowledge of medicine, still I know a broken bone when I see it." Disregarding the protest of the young soldier the good man insisted upon the arm being bared, and as he gently examined it he said, "I have seldom in my life seen such muscles. You are as powerful as a young bull. Does that hurt? Ah, I am confident there are no bones broken. It looks as if you might have had a fall of some kind."

"I did. I was thrown from my horse."

"Indeed! I should fancy with your strength you might be able to manage almost any horse you chose to mount. How did the accident occur?"

"Why — I — I was having a little argument with Lonesome Dick."

"And came out of it alive?" exclaimed the parson incredulously. "Why, there is n't a man in the Carolinas the match for that fanatic!"

"I can believe that," laughed the young soldier.

"How did he happen to let you go?"

"He was not in a condition to protest very strongly."

"What do you mean?"

"He was unconscious."

"Do you mean to tell me you overcame him? Were you alone?"

"I was alone with him," said the young soldier simply. "I escaped and went to the home of the widow Martin. Do you know her?"

"Has she five or six sons with Greene?"

"Yes, sir."

"I know her well. But how did you get the letter away from Lord Rawdon's courier?"

"That I cannot tell you—now," replied the young soldier, who was not minded to relate the part which Sarah and Martha had taken. The story, if it were known, might bring trouble upon the unprotected women.

"Well, well!" said the parson slowly. "This is most remarkable. Samson and Hercules both must have been among your ancestors. But enough of this. You must come into the house and be fed."

"I must start for General Greene's camp."

"No, sir. Not yet."

"Why not?"

"Because it will not be safe. I have—there is a man who works upon my place who has gone this morning to the camp of Williams. It isn't very far from here and he

will be back soon. As soon as he returns or I have word, you may go, but you must go in the proper way—not alone. The entire region is infested by tories and scattered bands of redcoats. You are in no condition, with that wrenched arm of yours, to meet any of them on your way. Lonesome Dick must have recovered from his encounter with you, and in your present predicament you would not be able to come out as you did before. Besides all that there are several men whom I am helping — No,” corrected the parson quickly, “not men whom I am helping, for I am a man of peace and a non-combatant. What I mean is that there are several men here who are waiting for the man to come back from the camp of Williams. Just as soon as he comes they are all to be taken to Greene’s camp. You must go with them and not think of venturing alone.”

“Who are these men?”

“I do not know their names.”

“How many are there?”

“Four or five, I should say.”

“And you don’t know who they are?” asked the young soldier, interested at once.

“No more than that they are eager to get back into Greene’s camp.”

“Where are they now?”

“I can’t tell you exactly. They are near here and are safe. When my—when the man comes back from Williams, he will summon them and then you can all go back together, to the camp, that is if this young fire-eating redcoat, whom I ferried across the creek, does not make too much trouble. I shall be glad when he comes and I have seen the last of him. Come into the house and let me give you something to eat now. That wrenched arm of yours also requires more attention.”

Perplexed as well as helped by the information which the rector had given him, the young soldier followed the man into the house where he soon was served with food and his wounded arm was cared for. Then, upon his host’s insistence, he was conducted to a room in the upper part of the house, where he was soon asleep after he had received Mr. Ellington’s promise that he surely would be permitted to depart early in the afternoon.

How long he had been asleep the young soldier did not know, but as he leaped from the bed and peered out of the little window in his room, he was startled when he saw the parson’s flat boat in the middle of the creek. On the boat was the parson, poling from the

back part of his rude little craft, while in front was a young officer of the redcoats who was holding his horse by its bridle. The sight was sufficient to banish all other thoughts for the moment from the mind of the excited young soldier, and instantly he was watching the approaching boat and its load. Slowly the boat was poled toward the little dock, but, for some unperceived cause, the parson failed to make a landing. The watching young soldier could see that the officer was impatient and was protesting when the rector slowly poled back into midstream and then, as he once more approached the little dock, again failed to make a successful landing.

The scene was becoming intensely interesting now to the watcher, and he laughed as he saw the protests of the redcoat and could hear his loud voice, though he was unable to distinguish the words he uttered. However, the young soldier fancied that he himself could supply them, and in spite of his own peril, he once more laughed as he saw that again Mr. Ellington did not succeed in bringing his boat to the dock in such a manner that his passenger might disembark. The protests were still louder now, and the anger

of the redcoat was manifest in his actions, even if his words were not plainly heard. Calmly, as if he was unaware of the feelings of his passenger, the parson poled back into the stream and, instead of even making an attempt to land, he continued to pole his clumsy craft now up and now down the creek, evidently disregarding the appeals and protests of the officer who was unable to leave his position by his horse's head.

What was that? The parson was singing. Some of the words of his song could be heard too. The watching young soldier laughed as he distinguished the words:—

“The barren wilderness shall smile,
With sudden greens and herbage crowned,
And streams shall murmur all around.”

“That's the best parson I ever saw,” the young soldier delightedly said to himself. “He knows how to do things. There—” The soliloquy was sharply interrupted as the boat now was manifestly being poled to the dock. In a brief time it was made fast and the passenger alighted, leading his horse ashore. The watching young soldier, still keeping himself out of sight, interested in all that the men were doing, was still observant of their actions. He was not in special fear for Mr.

Ellington's safety, still he was prepared to rush to his assistance at the first sign of danger. He could hear the men now, for the redcoat was almost beside himself with rage and was loudly berating his ferryman.

"You shall pay well for this, Mr. Ellington!" the officer was saying. "You don't know what you have been doing—keeping me out on that creek as you did! Why, the very fate of our army may have been settled right there and then!"

"That is neither for you nor me to determine," replied the parson calmly.

"Perhaps it is n't, but Lord Rawdon may be of another mind when he hears of it."

"Quite so."

"But why did you do it, Mr. Ellington?" persisted the angry young officer.

"If you really wish to know, I'll tell you."

"I do."

"Well, when I ferried you across Goose Creek this morning, do you recollect that you told me that never before had you had so short a ride for such a large fee? Do you recall your words?"

"I do. It was an outrage! A shilling for that little ride!"

"Your complaint was not without reason,"

admitted the parson mildly. "I do not intend to be unjust, so I concluded this time to give you a shilling's worth of riding for a shilling's worth of fee."

For an instant the young officer glared, speechless, at the parson. Then without a further word he leaped upon the back of his horse, and, driving his spurs into its flanks, started at breakneck speed down the long hill up which he had come in the morning in his pursuit of the man who had Rawdon's letter to Fort Ninety-Six.

CHAPTER XXVIII

NINETY-SIX

"I THOUGHT you said you were not committed to either side," said the young soldier when the parson entered the house.

"I am not '*committed*,'" replied Mr. Ellington, his eyes twinkling as he spoke. "I am a man of peace, and the man in need is the only one that appeals to me. My word has come from Williams," he added abruptly. "What are your plans, young man?"

"I have no plan except to get to the camp in the shortest possible time. I must start right away."

"Yes. You will not have to go alone."

"Who else is going?" asked the young soldier hastily. "Are you?"

"Am I going? No, sir. I am the rector of St. James's parish and I cannot abandon my work." Mr. Ellington spoke soberly, but there was a slight twitching in the corners of his mouth that somehow belied his serious manner.

"Then I must go at once."

"Very well. I'll call your comrades. You

will be safer to go with them than to try it alone. The woods are full of tories. There is also a man whom Williams is sending to the camp. Two others are to go with him and you can join the band. You will be much safer and there will not be any danger of losing your way. These men—”

“What’s that?” interrupted the young soldier sharply. From the direction of the barn there had come the sound of a prolonged and peculiar bray that he was certain only Job Buryman’s strange beast could emit. But what was the mule doing here? How came it that the powerful beast chanced to be in Parson Ellington’s barn at such a time as this?

The questions were expressed by the manner instead of by the words of the young soldier and the parson smiled as he replied, “That, sir, is a mule. Did you never see one? It may be of interest to you to go out to the barn and look it over.”

There was no need of further suggestion and the young soldier at once started with his companion for the barn. When they arrived the first sight that greeted their eyes was that of the lanky Solomon and John, both of whom were mounted upon the back of Job’s huge mule. Near by was another man whom the

young soldier had never seen before. He was mounted upon a horse, and apparently all three were on the point of departing.

"Hello, Nameless," said John, as he beheld his missing friend. "Where did you come from?"

"That isn't as important as where I'm going."

"Where is that?"

"The camp of General Greene."

"Same here. We'll go together. Solomon," John added as he turned to the man behind him, "Nameless is the commander of this expedition now."

Disregarding the lanky trooper's scowl, the young soldier said quickly, "If I am, then I want to start. Where's Job?"

"Dead," said John shortly.

"What? Dead? What do you mean? How—"

"That girl of Lonesome Dick says he was shot."

"By her father?"

"Probably. She didn't say. We had to take her word."

"How did you and Solomon get away?"

"A band from Colonel Williams's men did it. 'T was mighty lucky for us that they did,

too. They thought they had corralled this outlaw, or tory, they call Lonesome Dick. Nameless, he is about the worst you ever saw! He has a voice like thunder and a grip in his hands that would crack a gun barrel. You want to thank your lucky stars that you never saw him."

Mr. Ellington smiled as he heard the words, and turned to the young soldier to see what he would say. Disregarding the implied appeal the nameless soldier simply said, "Is this man to be our guide to General Greene's camp?"

"He is," replied Solomon. "He was sent by Williams."

"Then he must be all right. Why are you two using Job's mule? Where are your own horses?"

"We didn't wait to get them. Lonesome Dick might have objected, so we came away without requesting their return to us," said John dryly. "We were glad enough to get away ourselves, to say nothing about our horses."

As soon as the parson had been thanked for his kindness and aid, the little band at once set forth on its way to the American camp.

The ride was not a long one, and all except

the guide were surprised when, two hours after the departure from the home of the "non-partisan" parson, the little cavalcade found itself at the place it was seeking. Immediately leaving his companions, the young soldier at once sought the quarters of the commander, and, as soon as he was admitted, without a word placed in the hands of General Greene the letter which Sarah Martin and her sister-in-law had taken from Colonel Rawdon's courier.

That the letter was important the waiting young soldier knew at once, as he watched the countenance of the man before whom he was standing. When at last General Greene looked up he said quietly, "You have done well. Please to tell me how you secured this letter. It will change my plans at once."

Thus bidden, the young soldier related all that had befallen him in his attempt to intercept the courier of Colonel Rawdon, giving special praise to the intrepid girls who had been so daring in their efforts to aid him. But he did not refer to his encounter with Lonesome Dick.

"Those girls must be rewarded," said General Greene. "I notice that your left arm is troubling you. How was it injured?"

“A fall.”

“Will you please to look up this Barclay Martin and send him to me?”

The young soldier at once departed and, after a search, found the man whom General Greene desired to see and delivered his message. He then returned to his friends John and Solomon, and the experiences of all three were related, though still the young soldier did not refer to his encounter with the fanatical giant, who was known throughout the region as Lonesome Dick.

That the intercepted letter, which had been placed in General Greene's hands, was important became manifest before the afternoon had come.

“I'm telling you,” said John to his nameless friend, “that the letter had word for Colonel Cruger—he's in command at Ninety-Six, you know—that Rawdon is on his way. You'll see I'm right. We're going to do something to Ninety-Six before he can get there.”

“How large a force has the fort?”

“Light Horse Harry told me this morning there were supposed to be about six hundred regulars inside it. No, let me see. Only about half are regulars, but that won't make

any difference. We'll get every mother's son."

"Perhaps so, if Colonel Rawdon does n't come."

"What if he does?"

"He has twice as many men as we have. Parson Ellington told me it was a common report that Rawdon had received large reinforcements that had been sent over from Ireland."

"I don't care if they came from the New Jerusalem," declared John confidently, "we're going to be inside that fort before the redcoats can stop us."

A part at least of John's prophecy was fulfilled when it became manifest that General Greene was indeed planning now, either for an attack on the place, or to lay siege to it. But when the American army drew near the little village, it became plain that the task before them was no light one. The defenses consisted of a stockade fort, a fortified garrison, and the principal work, which, from its form, was known as the Star Fort.

The Polish officer, Kosciusko, who had joined the forces of the colonies from much the same motives that had brought young Lafayette across the ocean, in his later deeds

became famous for his ability; but at Ninety-Six, having been placed in charge of the engineering work by General Greene, his mistakes in his plans plainly cost the army its success. Not far from the fort there was a little stream which supplied the troops and the people of the little village with water. If the first efforts of the American army had been directed to stopping the water-supply, the fate of the fort might have been speedily sealed. But Kosciusko was insistent that the Star Fort should be the single object of attack, and, accordingly, works were thrown up near it that speedily were battered down by the guns of the fort. General Greene, still following the advice of the Pole, soon broke ground at a greater distance from the fort, and acted with increased caution.

Light Horse Harry's legion was directed to take post opposite the enemy's left and to begin regular approaches against the stockade. In a brief time Light Horse Harry's men dug a ditch to the ground where the dashing leader planned to plant a six-pound cannon. Within a day this battery had been erected and the steady approaches toward the stockade were begun.

The American soldiers were working with

enthusiasm in their attempt to take the last stronghold of the redcoats in the colony. By day and by night the ditches were being dug and the relays of men were ceaseless in their efforts to carry out the mistaken plans of Kosciusko. The plight of the soldiers besieged in Fort Ninety-Six was becoming desperate, but Colonel Cruger, its commander, was not a man to give up easily. At unexpected moments he sent out bands of his soldiers, equipped with bayonets, to fall upon the besiegers as they labored in the ditches. There was no rest for the American army. Sleepless, wearied, harassed by the fear as well as by the suddenness of the attacks upon them, they were all under a strain that knew no relief. Still they labored on. The trenches were steadily extended, the guns were brought nearer the fort, and daily, almost hourly, it seemed as if the men under Cruger must abandon all hope of successfully defending or even holding Ninety-Six.

In all these days John and Solomon worked desperately, but the injured arm of the nameless young soldier prevented him from wielding a shovel or pick. He was therefore most of the time among the sharpshooters posted for the defense of the toiling men.

At last there came a day when hope seemed

almost about to be fulfilled. The work had known no cessation and the attacking parties from the fort had been more numerous and their desperate efforts to drive away the besiegers had been redoubled.

Along the trenches that morning sauntered a rawboned, awkward countryman, gazing stupidly at the men in their labors in the trenches. No one had paid any attention to the apparently harmless man who in appearance at least was not unlike the people that daily visited the place and were looked upon by the legion as incapable of doing any harm. Slowly this man followed the trenches, disregarding the warnings which were freely given him, until at last he was at the end of the parallel nearest the fort. Suddenly his awkwardness disappeared and, running swiftly, he started directly toward the fort itself.

Shouts and calls and shots followed the fleet runner and it was also seen that his coming was awaited by equally excited men in the fort. The gate was flung open, and the swift runner was welcomed by loud and prolonged shouts. When it was too late the entrance of the countryman was understood by the toiling men of Greene's army. He was a messenger who had entered the fort with word from Lord

Rawdon, who doubtless was approaching with his army.

The conjecture was soon afterward found to be correct when General Greene himself received word that the British colonel was indeed advancing at the head of a force now so greatly reinforced that it was twice as large as that of the Americans. Instantly Greene sent Sumter, the Game Cock, with his men to harass and delay the approach of the redcoats, but the wily British leader succeeded in getting between Sumter and the fort, and pressed forward with increasing determination to the aid of his hardly beset comrades in Ninety-Six.

Should Greene abandon the siege of his fort for a time, advance to meet the oncoming redcoats, and, if he should succeed in driving them back, then return to Ninety-Six whose surrender could not long be delayed if Rawdon's troops could not come to its aid? The question was debated in every way, but at last it was decided that Greene's men, wearied by the heavy labors of the siege, and numbering only half as many as their enemies, were in no condition to wage a successful battle. The project therefore was abandoned.

Should an attack be made upon Ninety-Six before Rawdon's troops could come? General

Greene himself was in favor of not making the attempt. His men would be sacrificed in large numbers and he was not confident that their efforts would be crowned with success, for they were in poor condition for such a desperate conflict. The soldiers of his army, however, were so strong in their demand for an assault to be made and were so eager that their leader might have at least one successful battle to his credit, that at last the commander reluctantly consented and preparations were hastily made for an assault on the fort on the following day ¹ at noon.

Plans were formed for the men in the Maryland and Virginia brigades to attack on the left of the fort while Light Horse Harry's legion with the soldiers from Delaware were to attack on the right. At twelve o'clock on the following day the cannon sounded and the desperate assault was begun.

¹ June 18th.

CHAPTER XXIX

AN ASSAULT

EAGERLY the weary men undertook their task, realizing that the sole hope of the Americans depended upon a quick assault before the approaching troops of Lord Rawdon could appear on the scene. But Colonel Cruger, who was in command of Ninety-Six, was also aware of the same fact and his determination to hold the place was as strong as that of his enemies to take it. His sharpshooters were stationed at every opening in the parapets, while the openings themselves were protected by sand-bags. Along the parapets men had been placed who were armed with bayonets and spikes. In the midst of the fort Cruger had planted a battery of three pieces whose fire could be delivered either against the men on the right or against those on the left as occasion demanded.

Leaping into the ditch the Americans were compelled to contend not only with the men before them but also with those who were about them. But there was no hesitation. Desperately, in hand-to-hand conflict as well as in order,

the brave soldiers on either side battled for what they believed to be their rights and liberties. Slowly and steadily Greene's men pushed forward, grimly, silently, for they seldom replied to the taunting shouts of their foes; but at last, when the leaders of the men who were attacking on the right, had fallen, and all the guns of Cruger's battery had been trained on the daring invaders, the band was driven back after it had suffered frightful losses.

On the left, however, where Light Horse Harry and the men of his legion were fighting, matters were different. The gallant troopers desperately pushing their way forward, soon crossed the stream that entered the fort, and after some hard fighting, the place was stormed and the British soldiers fled to the shelter of the Star Fort.

Lee's plan was to follow up his success by attacking the Star Fort at the same time his colleagues were assaulting it; but before he could enter the contest there, he received orders to hold the stockade he had taken, and to make no further attack.

"What's the use?" muttered Solomon to the young soldier, who from the beginning of the engagement had fought by his side. "Here we have the stockade, we could cut

the Star Fort off from every drop of water. The redcoats are so crowded in there that they'd have to give up in no time."

"I can't tell you," replied Solomon's nameless comrade.

"It's a shame! Here we've fought our way right into the place we were told to take, and what does it all amount to? We don't want to stop here! What we want is to get the whole of Ninety-Six and every man in it."

"There's a good reason and we'll hear what it is all right. Did you ever see men fight as we did?"

"Did well," remarked Solomon grimly. "But I don't see that there is anything gained, if, after all we've done, we're just to stop where we are."

The cause of the sudden change in General Greene's plan became known soon afterward. The arrival of Lord Rawdon and his men was now so near at hand that, desperate as was the plight of the defenders of Ninety-Six, General Greene did not deem it wise to incur the risk of meeting in battle the veteran troops of the British colonel.

If the Americans should be defeated, the entire region would be left to the mercies of the tories and redcoats. There were too many

patriots in that part of the state who had shown their devotion by their willingness to sacrifice and suffer, to leave them without any protection at such a time. The preservation of the American army was of much greater importance than the capture of Ninety-Six.

In view of all these facts the sterling American leader called off his troops, publicly thanked them for their bravery and devotion, explained how near the British army now was on its march to the fort, praised the heroism of the one hundred and eighty-five brave men who had fallen during the siege, and then explained why a retreat had become necessary. If only three days more might have been had, the fort surely would have fallen; but the swift approach of Lord Rawdon did not permit of any further efforts, and speedily the retreat of the Americans from the tory-infested region was begun.

On the evening of the very day when the army, led by the British colonel, arrived at Ninety-Six, the pursuit of the retreating Americans was undertaken.

But the ready Greene, suspecting that this would be the very thing which Rawdon with his fresher and stronger troops would do, had

already sent his wounded and disabled men northward and consequently was not delayed on the march. When the army of General Greene reached Broad River, Rawdon abandoned his pursuit and returned to the fort which he had come to aid. Indeed, as the British colonel now returned to Ninety-Six he was followed all the way by Light Horse Harry's legion which Greene dispatched for that purpose; but no engagement occurred.

And now began another of those marvelous advances and retreats which have made the name of Nathanael Greene famous in the history of our land. He was soon informed that Ninety-Six had been abandoned by the British, and that the forces were gathering at Orangeburg. Here Greene, strengthened by the return of the Swamp Fox and the Game Cock with their men, offered battle, but he was not strong enough to attack the well protected place and the British did not care to enter into battle at the time. Outposts, however, were attacked and taken, and a continual skirmishing in the region was maintained.

Meanwhile, Colonel Rawdon had sailed for home, and his place in the war was taken by Colonel Stuart.

General Greene's troops meanwhile had ac-

quired much experience, and, in spite of continual defeats, had unbounded confidence in the ability and character of their daring leader. After reinforcements had been received, General Greene decided to attack his enemy who now had retired to a position on the Congaree River.

As soon as Colonel Stuart was informed of the approach of his foes, he withdrew to Eutaw where large reinforcements joined his troops. General Greene was advancing slowly, both because he was eager to save his men from the intense heat of the summer sun, and because he was waiting for the Swamp Fox to return from one of his numerous expeditions. Late in the afternoon of the seventh,¹ General Marion arrived and it was at once decided to attack the enemy the next day.

It was early in the morning (four o'clock) when Light Horse Harry's legion, together with the State troops of South Carolina, led the way in the advance up the rough and dusty country road. Behind them came the militia, and behind the militia were the regulars. Between the columns the little force of artillery marched and dragged their few cannon. In the rear of all were the cavalry, com-

¹ September 7, 1781.

manded by Colonel Washington, and the well-trained infantry of Kirkwood.

About eight o'clock the advance guard fell in with a party of redcoats that was escorting a foraging party back to their camp, only four miles distant. Instantly Light Horse Harry's legion opened fire, but almost before the action had fairly begun the protecting redcoats broke and fled. The cavalry continued to escape, for their horses were fleet, but all the foot-soldiers in the little protecting party either were killed or made prisoners.

But the Americans believed the foraging party to be the van of the British army, and instantly General Greene formed his line of battle. Francis Marion and General Pickens, in command of the militia, formed the first line, the continental infantry the second. On the right were the North Carolina men, in the centre the Virginians, and on the left the men of Maryland. Light Horse Harry's legion was to cover the right flank, the South Carolina men the left, and the cavalry and the best of the infantry to form the reserve. The plan was well and carefully formed.

The sturdy redcoats were quick to respond, and in a brief time they too were in battle array.

To the surprise of the British, as well as of the Americans, the militia did bravely, perhaps the name and presence of such men as Francis Marion, Pickens, and others inspiring them with unlooked-for courage.

Soon, however, some of the men in the American line began to give way and the British pressed forward. The men were not terrified nor thrown into disorder and still were fighting all the way. Some of the cannon on each side had been dismounted and consequently were useless.

At this moment Light Horse Harry ordered his men to turn the flank of the advancing redcoats, and soon the British line was striving to return the fire which now came from behind them as well as from in front. Soon the line wavered, and then retreated. Straight through the camp they had recently occupied, on toward Eutaw Creek the British left withdrawn.

The enthusiasm among the American soldiers became intense. At last it seemed possible that they were to win a battle! Before them the line of their enemies was steadily falling back. There was every prospect that, with the swift advance of the reserves under the leadership of Colonel Washington and

Wade Hampton, the retreat would become a rout.

The young soldier now found himself by the side of young Lieutenant Manning. The sturdy little officer was almost beside himself in his excitement. The roar of the battle, the neighing of the wounded horses, the calls of the excited leaders, the clouds of smoke, the sight of fleeing, shouting men, the cries of the wounded, the ghastly sights on every side were appalling. Apparently unmindful of all save overtaking the men before him, the young lieutenant pressed forward, occasionally calling to his friends to keep up with him.

Before them could be seen a mass of struggling redcoats pressing in a disordered mass toward a great house of red brick that stood not far from the springs.

"There go the Old Buffs!" shouted Lieutenant Manning, as he pointed in great excitement toward the British soldiers who in disorder were rushing toward the house. "That is the proudest company in Stuart's army! I wish we could head them off!" Suddenly his voice rose above all the din of battle, as, almost beside himself, without glancing behind him to see if his call were heeded, he shouted, "Come on, boys! Come on! We'll

get 'em ! We'll head them off ! Follow me ! Come on ! Come on, every one of you come !”

Alone the sturdy little officer started toward the old brick house. For a moment he was lost to sight in the rear of the redcoats that were struggling, fighting for an entrance into the place of safety. Unmindful of everything except the enemies before him, the boyish officer sped on until he himself was almost under the shelter of the building. Then for the first time glancing behind him he became aware that he was alone ! Not a man had followed him ! A sharp order from the leader himself, when he saw the apparently fool-hardy risk the young lieutenant was running, had compelled every man to keep his place and advance in order.

There was consternation among his friends as the predicament of the intrepid lieutenant became manifest. Already rifles were blazing from the windows of the building. The redcoats were quick to take advantage of the opportunity to shield their disorderly comrades, who, in confusion, were striving to enter the building. If the lieutenant should try to flee to his comrades, he would be the target for a hundred rifles. If he remained or tried to advance he would surely be captured.

But Lieutenant Manning was not yet lost. By his side, puffing and breathing loudly and with difficulty, was approaching one of the famous "Old Buffs." Aware of his presence the powerful little lieutenant instantly seized him from behind, grasping the stout old soldier by his arms and keeping the face of the man toward the house.

Then began a strange retreat. Still keeping the puffing soldier before him as a shield, Lieutenant Manning slowly backed away. The redcoats could not fire without endangering the lieutenant's "shield." The fat man was powerless in the grasp of his captor, the muscles of whose arms were like bands of steel.

Steadily, slowly, surely the lieutenant withdrew, and just as he regained the lines of his friends his wheezing prisoner stuttered, "L-let me g-go! I-I say l-let m-me g-go! I-I-I am Sir-Sir Henry B-bart, deputy g-general of the-the British army, c-c-captain in t-the fif-fifty-s-second regiment, s-secretary to the-the commandant at C-charleston —"

"That's enough! That's all right!" broke in the lieutenant. "That is the very man I wanted. Don't be scared! You shielded me and I'll protect you."

CHAPTER XXX

THREE RIDERS

A SHOUT and a roar of laughter arose from the lines, when the lieutenant turned the puffing, pompous Old Buff over to the guard. The demands of the hour, however, were too great to permit of delay and the battle was renewed with vigor. The redcoats in the brick house were pouring forth a steady and effective fire — so severe that it was not deemed wise to try to drive them out by storming the place. More than three hundred of the men who had sought to gain the shelter of the building were crowded out and had been made prisoners by the patriot soldiers.

The few remaining cannon were now brought up and an attempt was made to batter down the walls of the house, but the guns were too light to do effective work and were soon silent.

Meanwhile the forces of Colonel Washington had been ordered to fall upon the British right, when the left had begun to give way, and the bold and dashing leader at once moved for-

ward with his men. The redcoats, however, had taken their stand behind a thick growth of thorny bushes. When the American horsemen attempted to force their way through, the horses became unmanageable and the fearless leader, perceiving an opening between the lines, at once strove to dash through that. Here, however, his force was swept by a heavy fire and he was almost caught in the trap. Wounded, his men falling on every side, some of his best men made helpless by the unceasing fire, he at last, when his horse fell to the ground, was pinned to the earth and speedily made a prisoner. Most of his men, however, escaped, but the repulse which had been given by the determined British from behind the thick bushes had now enabled the leader of the redcoats to rally his broken regiments, and a renewed spirit of resistance was at once manifested.

The ground which Greene's soldiers now held was so extremely disadvantageous that the commander withdrew a short distance, collected his wounded and his stores and withdrew to the place he had occupied in the morning, planning to fight again just as soon as the British should try to retire. To prevent any aid coming to the hardly beset redcoats, Gen-

eral Greene dispatched Light Horse Harry and Marion, the Swamp Fox, to occupy ground in the rear. The British leader, however, withdrew from Eutaw and, when he had marched fourteen miles, a large force of reinforcements joined him. Either force was too large to be attacked by Marion or Light Horse Harry, and word was speedily sent General Greene who hastily moved forward his army. When he arrived at Monk's Corner, finding the numbers in the British army now to be larger than he had thought, and also discovering that the position which they held was one that would afford the redcoats every advantage in an engagement, if one should be attempted, Greene once more withdrew his army and retired to the hills of the Santee.

Although each side in the battle at Eutaw Springs claimed a victory, the real test came when the British retired from the region and left the Carolinas largely free from fear of attacks by the regulars. About six hundred was the estimated loss on each side in this battle.

So pronounced was the hope among the Americans that had been rekindled by the work of Greene in the South, particularly in the engagement at Eutaw Springs, that the

Congress voted their thanks to every corps in his army and to General Nathanael Greene himself voted a gold medal and one of the captured British standards.

"Humph!" growled Solomon to the young soldier when the action of the Congress was known among the soldiers. "Why didn't they do something worth doing?"

"What's the trouble, Solomon?" laughed his companion.

"Why, just look at it! Here's Nathanael Greene — he's still a young man —"

"About forty," interrupted the young soldier.

"That's young. Why I'm more than — I shall be forty some day myself —"

"You never will be forty."

"Why not?"

"Because forty is a long way back in your life. You must be at least —"

"Never mind that!" broke in Solomon quickly. "All I mean is that a man is still young if he's only forty. Now General Greene has a wife and five children. He's given up his business in Rhode Island and of course there is n't any business left. Now think —"

"I am thinking," said the young soldier. "I'm thinking how proud General Greene's

family always will be to have had him as one of their numbers. That British Standard will be something to make his sons and daughters proud of their name. That gold medal — ”

“Stuff!” growled Solomon. “How do you think a standard and a gold medal are going to feed a lot of hungry boys and girls? The vote is all right enough, as far as it goes, but as a diet for growing, hungry lads and lassies — why, I’d rather have a bag of the Swamp Fox’s sweet potatoes, myself.”

Soon after the battle of Eutaw Springs, Light Horse Harry’s legion was ordered to leave Greene’s army and go northward to join the army under Washington, which was holding Lord Cornwallis trapped on the little peninsula of Yorktown, in Virginia. Unknown to most of the men in the legion, the special task which was given Light Horse Harry was to gain the assistance of Count DeGrasse, the commander of the French fleet, which had been busily engaged in the West Indies, by inducing him to come to the assistance of Greene’s army in the South. With the British holding Charleston, it was believed that the combined forces on land and sea would enable the Americans to wrench that important place from the hands of their ene-

mies. Later it was understood why the plan was not executed, and DeGrasse's aid was secured for the Americans at Yorktown.

Before the legion of Light Horse Harry departed from Greene's army, there was a long interview between its commander and the young soldier. The subject of the interview was not explained by the latter when he departed from the colonel's quarters to join his friends, but his face was shining and his very manner betrayed the interest and excitement under which he was laboring. Seeking the place where Solomon and John were, he speedily explained to them that they three were to take their horses and go in advance of the legion, to discover if the way was clear or to report to the main body if the presence of prowling bands of tories should be detected.

"That mule is very becoming to you," suggested John to the young soldier, when the three troopers had left the legion far behind them.

"Yes," laughed the young soldier. "Somehow I've taken a fancy to Job's mule. Poor Job!" he added. "And you never heard just what became of him?"

"We knew without bein' told all the details," said Solomon. "When we heard that

shot of that gaunt horse-thief, Lonesome Dick, we knew he had n't fired into the air. That girl o' his told us Job had been shot, an' I reckon she knew."

"Strange that man should have had his daughter with him on his raids."

"Nothin' about Dick is strange when you all stop to think that he is a crazy man."

"What would you do if you should meet him, Solomon?" inquired John.

"Give thanks."

"Before you met him or after?"

"Just as soon as I set eyes on him. He's a cumberer o' the ground."

"Do you really think you could do anything if he once got his hands on you?" persisted John, winking at his other comrade as he spoke.

"The man doesn't live that I'm afraid of."

"That doesn't mean much. I've got a hound dog that is n't afraid of a bear, but somehow that dog the last time I saw him, could n't see out of either of his eyes, he had only one ear left, and he walked on three legs only."

"What's th' matter with him?" asked Solomon.

"Bears."

"Humph!" sniffed the lanky horseman.

"You can't throw this man either, Solomon," said John, as he glanced meaningly at the young soldier. "He threw Lonesome Dick."

"Who threw him?" said Solomon quickly.

"He did — this friend of ours who has n't any name. By the way, don't you think it's about time for you to tell us who you really are?" added John, as he looked again at his nameless comrade.

"Never mind that now," said Solomon. "What I want to know is if what you all said is so. Did this man really throw Dick Davis?"

"Solomon," said John, in mock seriousness, "I must tell you the truth, he did."

"How do you all know? Did he tell you about it?" sneered the gaunt horseman.

"He did not."

"Who did, then?"

"Two different men."

"Who were they?"

"One was Light Horse Harry and the other was Barclay Martin."

It was plain that Solomon was impressed, though he was still somewhat skeptical.

"Must have been luck," he growled. "Why don't you tell us about it?" he demanded.

"There is n't much to tell," said the young soldier lightly. "Lonesome Dick and I had a meeting and I was lucky enough to come out of it with only an arm sprained."

"Yes, but you left Dick unconscious," suggested John quickly.

Solomon's respect for his nameless comrade at once increased, but he was not yet ready to acknowledge all that had been said. He asked many questions as the trio rode forward, most of which were answered by John. The young soldier, however, was quick to respond to the questions concerning the part which Sarah Martin and her sister-in-law had taken in securing the letter which Lord Rawdon had dispatched by a courier to Ninety-Six.

"They're just like all the women folk in the Carolinas," said Solomon, when at last all the story had been told.

"Then you ought to be proud of both colonies," said the young soldier.

"I reckon we are. They are the best —" began Solomon.

"We all will take your word for it," broke in John. "Just now I'd like to know why we three have been sent ahead of the legion. We may find that out right soon though, I reckon," he added.

"How?"

"Wait," replied John shortly. "Now then, are you all going to tell us who you are?" he asked, as he turned again to his nameless friend.

"Don't you know me by this time?"

"We don't know even what your name is."

"Do you think you would know me better if I should tell you that?"

"I surely do."

"Why?"

"Every man has a name. You know mine, but I don't know yours, nor do I know why you are so secret about it. You are not ashamed of it, are you?"

"Not a bit."

"Then why don't you tell it?"

"When I first came to the legion, away back in Jersey at Monmouth Court House, there were good reasons for not telling who I am. Then when I stayed on, Colonel Lee did not know but I might — he thought it would be better just to keep on as I had begun."

"You are not a spy?"

"Have I been acting like one?" laughed the young soldier.

"Can't say as you have. You're going to Yorktown with us?"

"If I don't go somewhere else," said the young soldier, smiling as he spoke. "Do you know, I have come to think there is only one man in our army who has more tricks and daring in him than Light Horse Harry has?"

"Who's that? You?" said Solomon.

"It is Mad Anthony Wayne. The two men don't look a bit alike; but when they start they both go at their work in the same way. Mad Anthony would go to the infernal regions if he was ordered—"

"He'd be likely to find Light Horse Harry there before him," interrupted John. "Not because he belonged there," he added, with a laugh, "but if the two started at the same time, Light Horse Harry would get there before the other could."

"Would he?"

"He surely would."

"How do you know?"

"Because he always does. He can't be second in a race. But are you going to tell us your name? Do you know I have sometimes suspected that you were —"

"Who?" laughed the young soldier, as his friend hesitated.

"Look yonder," broke in Solomon, pointing to an old mill on the bank of the stream along

the shore of which the little party was riding. "I know that mill. It belonged years ago to Daniel Sisson. He's been dead and gone since I was a boy. We all will stop here an' cook our supper."

John's interest in the name of the young soldier was speedily forgotten when they halted beside the mill. Dismounting, they tied their horses to the near-by trees and then, without a suspicion that the crumbling mill was different from what it appeared to be, approached the rude door, pushed it back and entered.

CHAPTER XXXI

IN THE OLD MILL

APPARENTLY no one had been in the building for a long time and the air of desertion was marked on every side. "Just the place for us!" exclaimed John with enthusiasm. "If we could find some meal here for our horses we'd be fixed all right."

"Look about a bit. Maybe you will find some," suggested Solomon. "While you all are doin' that we'll start a fire an' be gettin' some supper ready."

Acting upon the suggestion, Solomon and the young soldier at once cut wood and started a fire on the bank of the pond, beside which the mill was located, while their companion entered upon a search of the premises in the hope that provisions of some kind for their horses would be found. The mule and the two horses had been hobbled and tied within the border of the adjacent trees and permitted to browse on the leaves and scanty grass.

"We'll start again as soon as we have cooked this pork and meal," said the young

soldier to his companion, as he threw a fresh armful of wood upon the crackling flames over which Solomon was holding a frying-pan.

"Yo' don't say so!" drawled Solomon. "Perhaps yo' 're a-speakin' fo' yourself. I'm thinkin' o' havin' a bit o' sleep in th' old mill befo' I start no'th."

"You will do as you please," retorted the young soldier. "We'll wait till we have had some of this fried pork before we discuss —"

The young soldier stopped abruptly as at that moment one loud sharp call for help came from within the mill. The voice did not sound like John's, but, as far as they knew, there was no other person in the crumbling building.

Instantly springing to their feet the two troopers turned to the door of the mill, but before they entered the young soldier said sharply to his companion, "Solomon, you stay outside and keep watch there. I'll go inside."

"I reck'n I'll go in."

"No, you stay out here."

Solomon stopped a moment and stared impudently at his companion, but as he did not offer to follow the suggestion, the young soldier suddenly grasped the lanky man by the shoulders, turned him sharply about, and sent him sprawling to the ground, while he himself

darted into the old mill without waiting to look back to see whether or not the trooper was following him.

The thought in the young soldier's mind was that John must have met with an accident. Perhaps he had fallen through the decayed planks or had slipped on some of the stones. Accordingly he began to search for his friend in some place on the lower floor of the mill.

For some reason he did not call to him as he ran hastily from one place to another without discovering his friend. A strange silence rested over the place, and as the young soldier became aware that Solomon had not followed him he was oppressed by a new and unusual feeling of loneliness. What had become of John? After he had run up the rude steps to the loft and made certain that his friend was not there, he ran back to the hopper.

Suddenly the mill seemed to shake itself and groan. The rafters creaked and trembled and a dull heavy sound filled the air. The sun had set, but there was still sufficient light to enable the young soldier to look about him. Certainly John was not to be seen. The rumbling in the old mill became louder, and suddenly the young soldier became aware of the cause. The water had been turned on and the

old wheel with many creakings and groanings began to turn. But who had opened the gates?

The question was as startling as it was puzzling, and in renewed excitement the young soldier ran swiftly to the open space from which he could look down into the pit and see before him the slowly moving wheel. The blades were moss-covered, and as they slowly rose toward him he could see that some of them were missing.

Suddenly, as the great wheel rose, the young soldier leaned lower and in alarm gazed at the sight before him. Upon the wheel there was strapped the body of a man, which even in the dim light he recognized as that of his friend.

“Solomon! Solomon! Come in here! Come!” shouted the young soldier as he turned about for a moment. His alarm was increased when he beheld directly behind him the huge fanatic who was known throughout the region as Lonesome Dick. The expression of the man’s face was that of one who had at last done something which had brought him satisfaction. There was no trace of the rage which the young soldier had at one time seen upon it. His manner was calm, almost dignified, and as he

heard the loud call for help he in nowise appeared to be startled or even alarmed.

“Broken as on a potter’s wheel! Around and around go the enemies of the king and they shall not arrive! The circle is now complete and the plains are no longer inhabited! Thus shall it be done unto all whom the king shall delight to dishonor!” shouted Dick in solemn tones. The voice of the man was as deep as the roar of the tumbling water. He did not advance toward the young soldier, but standing still kept his gaze upon the revolving wheel.

All this had taken but a moment and the young soldier saw that the body of his friend was now so near that he could touch it with his hand. “Solomon! Solomon!” he called once more in his loudest tones. “Come in here! Come! Come!”

As he called, the young soldier threw himself upon the blade of the wheel next above that to which John was tied. His hands slipped on the moss-covered edge and for a moment he thought he was about to fall. By a greater exertion he contrived to seize the edge of the wheel in his arms while he wrapped his legs about the opposite side.

Although the attempt had required but a

moment and the huge wheel was moving slowly, still by the time success had crowned his efforts and he had gained a firm grasp, he was swept under the water which had been let into the raceway. By a desperate effort he managed to retain his hold and then slowly began to rise as the revolving wheel brought him up out of the water. His garments were dripping, his mouth was filled with water as he rose, but still retaining his hold he leaned forward until he could see the face of John. Whether his friend was alive or dead he was not able to discern, but exerting himself he leaned forward until he grasped the rope by which John's body was bound to the wheel.

Fortunately there was sufficient space between the great wheel and the walls of the pit in which it was placed to enable the bodies of the two young troopers to escape contact with the jagged stones. Again the wheel brought the boys upward and then once more began its descent. As he came on a level with the floor the young soldier saw Solomon darting into the mill and running swiftly toward the fanatic who had not moved from the place in which he had first been discovered. Before the young soldier could see the meeting of the two men or learn what Solomon was about to

do, the great wheel swept him below the level of the floor and both men were hidden from his sight.

Once more bracing himself strongly, and grasping still more firmly in his arms the sides of the wheel, the young soldier was swept again under the water. This time, however, he was prepared for the plunge and when he emerged a moment later he was not choking. Instantly he raised himself in his place and holding firmly to the wheel, with one hand leaned forward and attempted to free John from the bands by which his friend was held.

The cords, however, had been firmly drawn, and having the use of only one hand, the young soldier was not able to untie the knots when once more the revolving wheel brought him to the level of the floor where he had seen Solomon and the fanatical tory. As he peered eagerly before him he was unable to see either of the men. Where they had gone or what had become of them was a mystery.

Aware now that it would be impossible for him alone to free his friend from his terrible predicament, the young soldier braced himself, and as the wheel came nearer the raceway he flung himself free from the wooden blade and was thrown upon the ground of the cellar.

Scrambling to his feet, filled now with the thought of the possibility of shutting off the water as the only means of rescuing John, the young soldier ran to the place where he thought the gate was likely to be. To his joy he quickly found the place he was seeking and with one strong pull the water was shut off. With many a creak and groan the laboring wheel gradually ceased its motion and in a brief time was still.

Excited as he was by the terrible experience through which he had just passed, the young soldier's manner was quiet as he instantly turned to the raceway to see if John had been held under the water when the great wheel had ceased its motion. It was too dark now to enable him to see plainly into the stream, but not discovering the body of his friend there he began to mount the blades, climbing from one slippery foothold to another. He had mounted toward the top before his search was ended and there before him, fast bound and wet, was the body of his unconscious comrade.

Desperately the young soldier worked at the cords which had been tightly drawn, and at last he drew the ropes from their places and attempted to lift John in his arms. The moss-covered wheel afforded but an uncertain foothold and all the strength of the young

soldier was required to hold his friend and avoid a fall. Slowly, cautiously he drew back until he was only a few feet from the ground, then taking a fresh grasp on John's body he at last succeeded in gaining the place he sought. Stretching the unconscious young trooper on the ground, he first satisfied himself that life was not extinct, then leaving John he once more clambered up the wheel to learn how Solomon had fared at the hands of the crazed tory.

When he regained the floor above him he instantly looked about the room for the lanky trooper. He had not heard a weapon fired nor had there been any sound of a struggle, but the noise of the rumbling wheel might have drowned that, he thought, as he tried to discover Solomon's whereabouts.

The great room was still now and in the dim light the various parts appeared to be almost ghostly. The windows had long since disappeared, but the light from outside indicated where they originally had been.

Suddenly the young soldier discovered the two men for whom he was searching. A rough unhewn post supported the beams of the mill, and as he glanced at it he saw that the men were close to it. As he crept nearer,

he became aware that one of them was fast bound to the post and the other was standing in front of him, muttering words which at first were indistinguishable as he wildly waved his hands.

“Shall the prey be taken from the mighty? Shall the lawful captive be delivered? No man can enter a strong man’s house and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. Have I no power to deliver? In Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call. In six troubles, yea, in seven —”

The deep-toned voice kept steadily on and the young soldier, as he stopped and watched the huge mountaineer, was aware that he had to deal with a maniac. Every weapon had been carelessly left outside the mill when preparations for supper had been begun. It was too late now to attempt to regain them, he decided, for at any moment the giant might cease his solemn quotations and fall upon his helpless victim. What he did he must do at once, the excited young soldier decided instantly.

Apparently the man was not aware of his presence, or if he was aware he ignored it.

Advancing softly the young soldier at first was tempted to speak quietly to Dick. Perhaps the man might listen to his suggestions, for men with delusions sometimes could be quieted in this manner, or so he had heard. But the fear lest Dick's companions might be near and that the fanatic might at any moment fall upon his helpless victim, caused the young soldier to abandon the suggestion.

“‘I will cleanse the blood that I have not cleansed,’” began the giant, extending his hands and looking upward as he spoke. The declaration was not completed, however. With a leap the desperate young soldier flung himself upon the giant and the Biblical quotations were abruptly ended.

CHAPTER XXXII

CONCLUSION

THE arm of the young soldier had been flung about the neck of Dick as the latter was borne to the floor and the advantage which he had gained in being the one to attack was not lost. Struggling, striking, kicking, the maniac was like some infuriated wild animal attacked by its foes. And yet, do what he might, he was unable to shake off the grip in which he was held. His contestant dared not let go, but as he held on with grim determination both were rolled toward the pit in which the wheel was located. At last the two struggling men were on the border of it and the conflict resolved itself into an effort on the part of each to thrust the other into the raceway below them. The arm of the young soldier, drawn tightly about the neck of his enemy, did not relax, while with his free arm he thus far had contrived to keep Dick from obtaining any firm grasp. The two bodies now seemed to be almost motionless in the tense strain. Any attempt to change his position was thwarted by

the strength and agility of the other. The labored breathing of the contestants could be heard above the sound of the waters in the race-way. In the dim light the objects in the old mill could not be plainly seen, although once when the young soldier in a smothered tone called to Solomon it almost seemed to him that he could see the lanky trooper striving to free himself from his bands.

The struggle at last settled into a test of endurance, as neither of the two men was able to break the hold of his opponent. Again and again to the young soldier it seemed as if he must let go his grasp, but still he clung desperately to the advantage he had gained when he had first thrown himself upon the mountaineer. Never before had he been in a contest when his strength had been so terribly tested. Suddenly he recalled the trick by which he had thrown the champion wrestler in the company which Mad Anthony had raised and drilled at Chester before the outbreak of the war. Now that the strength of Dick had been put to such a prolonged and severe strain the same trick might avail again. Instantly he decided to use it. Relaxing slightly his grip on his enemy he found that Dick as quickly responded by increasing his own exertion. The young

soldier smiled grimly as he became aware that apparently his enemy was playing directly into his hands. Cautiously the younger of the wrestlers slipped his arm lower and then, as he expected, Dick suddenly exerted himself and arose staggering to his feet though his opponent was still clinging to him.

Like a flash the smaller man slipped partly under the body of his foe, his arm still held around the giant's neck. Bracing himself for one supreme effort he threw all his strength into the pull and, as the older wrestler's head was held low, his body slowly began to rise from the floor. Kicking, struggling, vainly seeking to obtain a foothold or purchase, the huge body steadily came up, the feet could not touch the planks, and then, by a sudden twist and a mighty heave, the body of Lonesome Dick was thrown over the tense back of his smaller contestant and fell with a thud at full length upon the flooring.

Instantly the young soldier leaped upon the fallen man who had for the moment been stunned by the fall. Before the giant could recover, his opponent had securely bound the man's hands behind his back and then fastened his feet in a similar manner.

Satisfied that his victim now was helpless

and could not escape, the young soldier ran quickly to the place where Solomon was tied fast to the pillar. In a moment the trooper was freed.

"Look out for the tory!" exclaimed the young soldier breathlessly. "I'll go to John." Leaving Solomon as a guard for the man, the young soldier ran swiftly to the place where he had left his companion and was delighted when he saw that his friend had recovered consciousness. It was but the work of a few minutes to assist him to the floor above and, as the boys drew near, Solomon, glancing down at the helpless man before him, said, "He's harmless and he hasn't got away. How is John? Is he all right?"

"He's here. I think he'll be able to speak for himself soon. Now then," the young soldier added as he leaned low over the giant, "what have you to say for yourself, Lonesome Dick?"

The huge mountaineer groaned but did not reply.

"Where are your friends?" demanded the young soldier sternly.

"I have no friends."

"Where are the men who were with you?"

"Gone."

"Where?"

"Gone with Colonel Stuart."

"What were you doing here?"

"Waiting."

"For what?"

"For my girl."

"Where is she?"

"She was to meet me here to-night."

"What did you intend to do?"

"Go back home."

"And not fight any more?"

"Why should I fight? 'Israel turned their backs before their enemies.' Who am I to contend alone for the king? There is no king in Israel any more."

"Are you telling the truth?"

"The king of terrors is the only king I am left to serve," said Dick solemnly.

"Dick, if I let you go, will you promise to go back to your home and never take up arms against the colonists again?"

"'Who is fit to be a king amongst us?' I have left home. I have fought for King George and what have I left? Only this — 'the younger have me in derision.' 'I have gone with them that deride me into the pit.'"

"Not quite into the pit. Dick Davis, this is your last chance. If you will promise to go

home and never again do any harm to any of the colonists I will set you free."

"Don't forget Job," suggested Solomon in a low voice.

Ignoring the word of his companion the young soldier again turned to the man on the floor and said, "What is your answer, Dick?"

"I'll promise."

"Then you are a free man." The young soldier stooped and cut the cords that bound the giant and assisted the man to rise.

"How did you do it?" demanded Dick solemnly, as he stood looking into the face of the young soldier who was at least a foot shorter than he.

"Do what?"

"Bind me. You were alone. You had none to help."

"Good luck — and a trick," laughed the young soldier. "Now, Solomon," he added, turning to the trooper, "we might as well have our supper."

"We'd better leave while we can."

"We'll have our supper. Dick is hungry and so are we all, and John and I want to dry our clothes. Start up your fire again."

To the surprise of his companions Solomon did not protest, and in a brief time, standing

before the roaring fire which the trooper rekindled and on which the pork and corn meal were speedily cooked, the young soldier and John, now largely recovered from their recent experiences, were eating as if they were concerned only with satisfying their hunger. Dick had refused to join them in the repast and without a word had turned into the forest and speedily disappeared.

"You made a great mistake in letting him go," said Solomon.

"Did I?" laughed the young soldier.

"Yo' cert'nly did, sir. Why, sir, that man — that man, Dick Davis, is surely th' most pow'ful man in the Carolinas."

"Except one," suggested John.

"Who's that?"

"It's Nameless here."

"You surely are a good man," acknowledged Solomon without a trace of jealousy in his manner. "Why, sir, Dick handled me as if I was a baby. I never befo', sir, felt such a grip. How did yo' all manage toe floor him?"

"Luck."

"No, it was n't luck. Yo' cert'nly did handle him! I'm willin' toe acknowledge, sir, that yo' are a good man — a better man than I am."

"Am I?" laughed the young soldier.

"Yes, sir ; though I think you must have had —"

"Never mind what I had," broke in the young soldier. "I was afraid there for a little while that Dick 'had' me. If it had n't been for a trick in wrestling that I learned before I joined Mad Anthony's company —"

"Then you were one of Mad Anthony's men, were you?" interrupted John quickly.

"Yes. I suppose I was — and am," acknowledged the young soldier.

"Did you ever wrestle?"

"Sometimes. Why?"

"Were you ever thrown?"

"I did n't happen to find the man who could do that. I have n't any doubt that he is there somewhere, but I have been lucky enough to escape his kind attention, that's all."

"I know now who you are, Nameless!" said John excitedly.

"So? How did you happen to find that out?"

"You are Noah Dare — the best wrestler in all Mad Anthony's troops."

"That is my name. I have to acknowledge that I am Noah Dare."

"I might have known it. Every man in Light Horse Harry's legion knew about you.

We were all eager to have a bout between you and Solomon here. He's the best man we have."

"He's a better man than I am," said Solomon soberly. "I'll own up without trying a fall. Lonesome Dick handled me as if I was a baby and yet this fellow threw him and tied his hands and his feet."

"Why did n't you tell us who you were?" demanded John.

"There were two reasons. One was that I did n't expect to stay when I brought that message from General Washington to Light Horse Harry at Monmouth Court House, and the general had told me not to give my name —"

"Did n't Light Horse Harry know it?" interrupted John.

"No."

"Why did n't you tell him?"

"Oh, I had heard that he wanted to arrange a bout between Solomon and me and I did n't want to try it."

"You would have been safe," spoke up Solomon. "Safer a good bit than I would."

"I'm not sure about that," laughed Noah.

"Well, I am," said Solomon firmly. "I know a good man when I see him."

“Do you?” replied Noah, smiling as he recalled the jealousy of the horseman. “Well, all I can say is that I’m glad to take your word without any other test. It sometimes seems to me that our men are crazy about wrestling in the camp — as crazy as Lonesome Dick is about the king. I’m glad Dick has gone, anyway.”

“If he doesn’t come back,” suggested John.

“He won’t come back. He’s a wild man but he’ll stick to his word.”

“What are you going to do next, Noah Dare?” asked John.

“Go back to Mad Anthony.”

“Where is he?”

“He’s with Lafayette. When I came down here with the legion, I knew that Mad Anthony was to be sent south. It was the common talk that he was to join Greene; and that was the first plan, for Light Horse Harry himself told me. But he told me too that it was afterward decided that Mad Anthony should stay in Virginia and help General Lafayette there.”

“Poor General Greene was left pretty much alone.”

“He doesn’t need any sympathy. Just think of what he has done! He has forced the redcoats back into Charleston and helped

the Carolinas to free themselves from the work of such men as Rawdon, and Cruger, and Tarleton. The Swamp Fox and the Game Cock have been almost everywhere at once. And Light Horse Harry's legion — why there is n't a better troop in the whole army! Such men as Light Horse Harry and Mad Anthony ought to make some of our men go and hide themselves. I know, for I have seen both of them and I tell you they're men to make us proud! And now after we've driven the red-coats out of North and South Carolina, and cooped them up in Charleston, and Lafayette and Mad Anthony and all the rest have Cornwallis trapped on the York peninsula, I'm telling you that we'll soon hear something that will make us all stand up and sing 'Yankee Doodle.'"

"You can't sing that he came to town riding on a 'pony' — you'll have to say it 'riding on a jackass or Job Buryman's mule,'" laughed John.

"I don't care what I sing it on. All I want is to have a chance to sing it anyway. And now that General Washington is with Lafayette —"

"What!" interrupted John.

"That's true. He's there and his army is,

too. We've got twice as many men as Cornwallis has and his lordship can't do a thing."

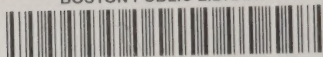
"Clinton may come from New York to help him."

"Too late. Clinton was tricked into staying in New York. He can't help Cornwallis now, even if he wants to, which some say he does n't."

"Come on!" said John excitedly. "Why don't we start for Yorktown ourselves? We want to be there when Cornwallis surrenders."

The suggestion to proceed was at once acted upon and the three horsemen or "two horsemen and a muleman," as John described the trio, at once departed, riding swiftly in the night on their way to Yorktown.

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LIGHT HORSE HARRY'S LEGION



By EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

